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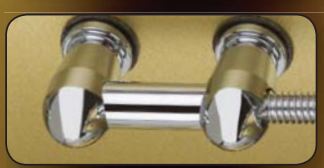

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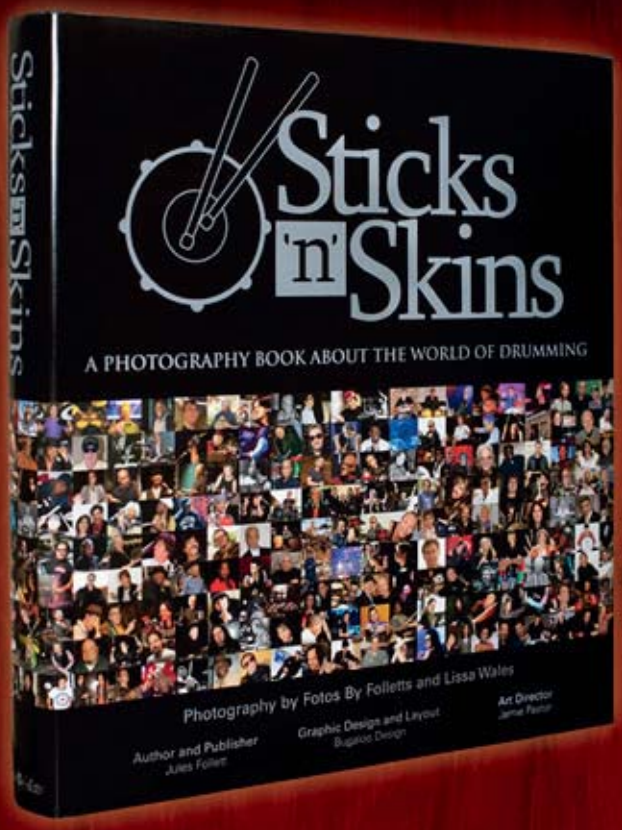

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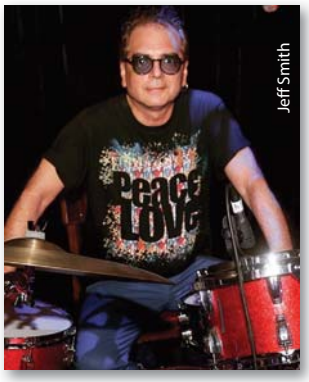
AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Hidden Treasures



Hello, everyone in *MD* land. I hope your summer went well. There were so many classic and new bands out on the road; hopefully you got to enjoy a few of those live shows. And hopefully you didn't miss last month's "Alive and Kicking!" theme issue, in which we interviewed players who power the world's biggest musical acts. We talked to the drummers with Bruno Mars, Kendrick Lamar, Bon Jovi, Damian Marley, and Lamb of God about their daily routines, their nightly responsibilities, and what it takes to play at the very highest levels of stage performance, where it's not just the skills that matter, but the consistency. The issue is full of lessons we can all benefit from learning, no matter how big or how small the audiences are that we play to.

If you didn't happen to catch the issue, though, you still can! In fact, you never have to miss an issue of *Modern Drummer* ever again. Every month, when the new *MD* hits newsstands, we post its entire contents online. When the next issue comes out, the previous one becomes available to readers who subscribe to our online Archive.

I can tell you, you can get lost for hours in the Archive. Like so many of our readers, I have stacks of *Modern Drummer*. I'm one of those people who prefers reading something in print. But I also like being able to access the information in all those old issues whenever and wherever I want. It's sort of like having all your favorite records in your iTunes library.

By adding the Archive to your *MD* print or digital subscription, you can access our entire catalog on your phone, tablet, and computer. Since we've all become dependent on our smart devices, I actually forgot what it's like to flip on the computer and see the pages digitally come alive. Trust me, you can get lost for hours, days, and months going through them all. It's like finding hidden treasures everywhere—features you missed or forgot about, and ads and reviews of products from when they were first introduced to the public. I constantly use the Archive for research purposes, and as a fan and student of drumming, I use it for leisurely fun and for serious learning.

For more than forty years, we've been proud to offer drummers the most informative and accurate information available. Looking back, I'm amazed at the content we've published—not only on the top drummers in the world, but also the up-and-coming ones, some of whom went on to become cover artists themselves.

We're truly grateful that all these great players agreed to sit down with us and let us pick their brains. This would also be a good time to thank all of our advertisers for their support over the years—and to welcome the new companies that future generations of players will come to know and endorse. And while I'm at it, we always like to take the opportunity to thank you, the reader. Without your support, there's no us.

Enjoy this month's issue. See you next time!

Billy Amendola
Editor at Large

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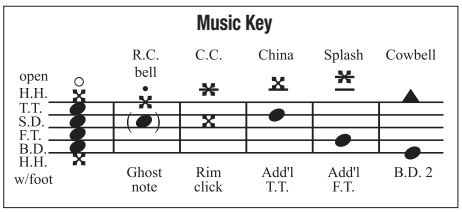

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What's Your Favorite Buddy Rich Performance?

In this month's Jazz Drummer's Workshop, the author and educator Eric Fischer analyzes one of Buddy Rich's earliest surviving recordings. We reached out to our readers and social media followers to find out what other performances from throughout the legendary drummer's remarkable career rank highly among the drum community.

"Love for Sale" from *Big Swing Face*. Buddy's band swings like no other. The tempo is absolutely perfect, although it's slightly quicker than other versions. And the technical precision demonstrated during his single-stroke drum breaks is awe-inspiring. In my opinion, no group since comes close to Buddy and his band.
Bill Looney

"Channel One Suite" from *Mercy, Mercy* really showcased his raw talent and speed. And the last minute of machine gun–fire snare patterns is crazy!
John Alesi

"Diabolus" from the album *The New One!* The entire performance is stellar, but the second drum solo that kicks in around the 6:23 mark is just mind-boggling to me. I still can't believe what I'm hearing, and I have yet to figure out what he's doing on the snare.
Steve Ferraro

Big Swing Face, because the first time I listened to that entire album I understood what my drum teacher meant by playing ahead of the beat. He had previously tried to explain the concept, but I had a hard time understanding it, so instead he told me to listen to that record.

Buddy's playing isn't everybody's cup of tea, but he was undeniably a virtuoso—and his band wasn't too shabby either. Aside from his ability, Buddy's playing created a sense of excitement as he pushed the whole orchestra along.
David Fogarty

"The Rotten Kid" from the album *The New One!* has groove, swing, and chops all in one. And any of his appearances on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* are untouchable.
Bill Fleming

I've listened to the live version of "Channel One Suite" from *The Best of Buddy Rich: The Pacific Jazz Years* many times. I had to play it back in high school, and I remember being in awe of every precise drum break, [each] feel change, and the overall energy and excitement of the piece.
Steph Barker

His comping was great behind the sax solo on "The Rotten Kid," and during the shout section at the end of that song he created a wall of sound for the band to ride like only he could.
Dustin Johnson

Live at the 1982 Montreal Jazz Festival. I love the way Buddy's drums sound in that show, and his playing on "Brush Strokes" is mesmerizing. But when I want to listen to one of Buddy's albums, I usually play *Big Swing Face* because it swings incredibly.
Dave Ferris

Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and keep an eye out for next month's question.

Brann Dailor

Thank you for the much deserved second cover story on Mastodon's Brann Dailor [August 2018 issue]. I got the chance to see them co-headline with Primus on their recent tour, and to meet Brann, the band, and the supporting crew. Everyone was professional, down-to-earth, and extremely gracious with family and visitors alike. I got to see Brann interact with fans, and he offered them words of thanks and encouragement. The band members spoke at length about their shared passions and drive to make their art and how they don't take their success for granted, which were sentiments echoed in Brann's cover story.

Having met him and the band, it's clear they're not just great musicians, but close friends who remain normal, approachable guys despite their fame and success—character traits that will continue to serve them, their music, and their fans well.
Natan Khishchenko
Rochester, NY

Dropped Beat

The feature on Lisa Pankratz in our September issue should have included the fact that she is an official endorser of Promark drumsticks.

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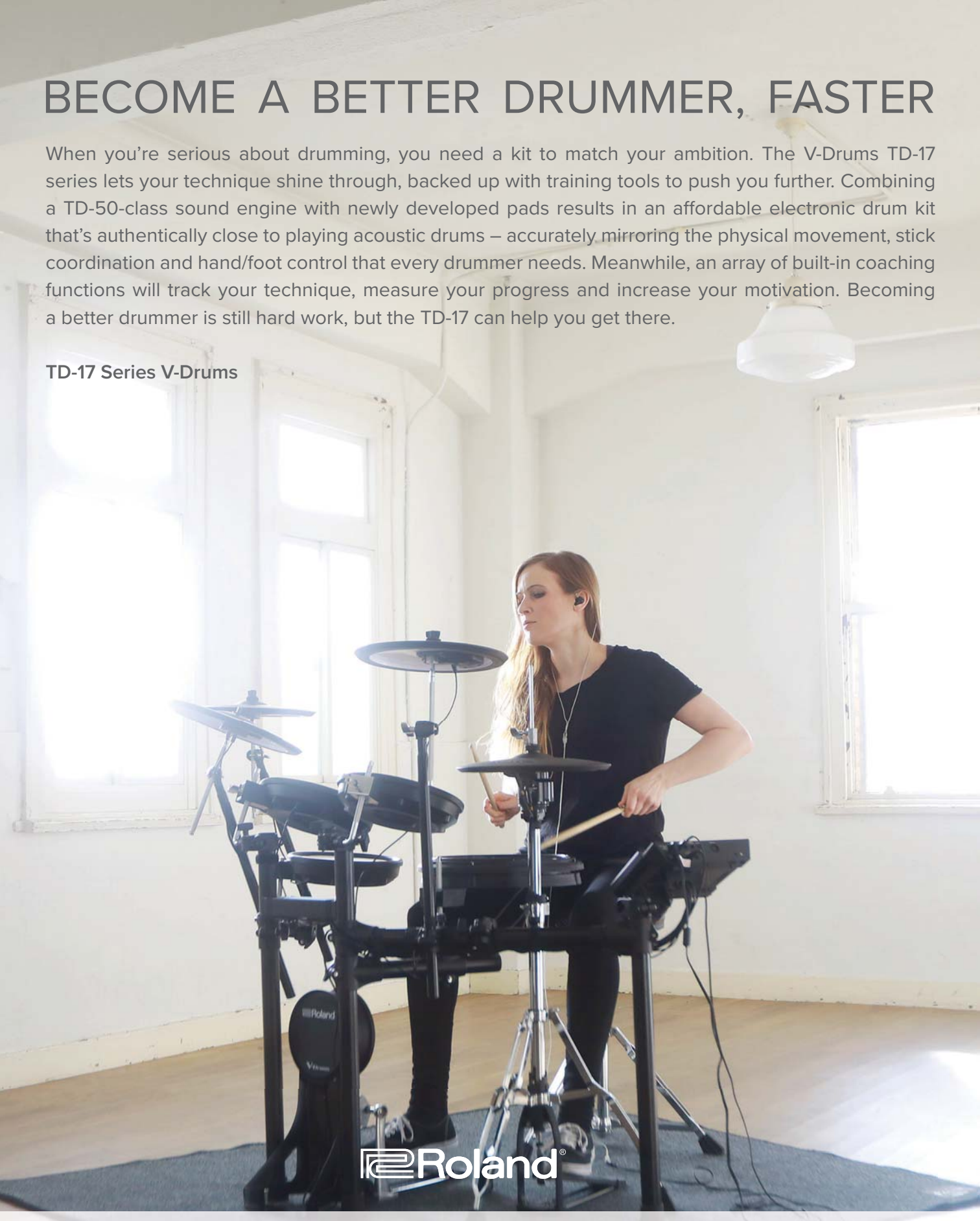

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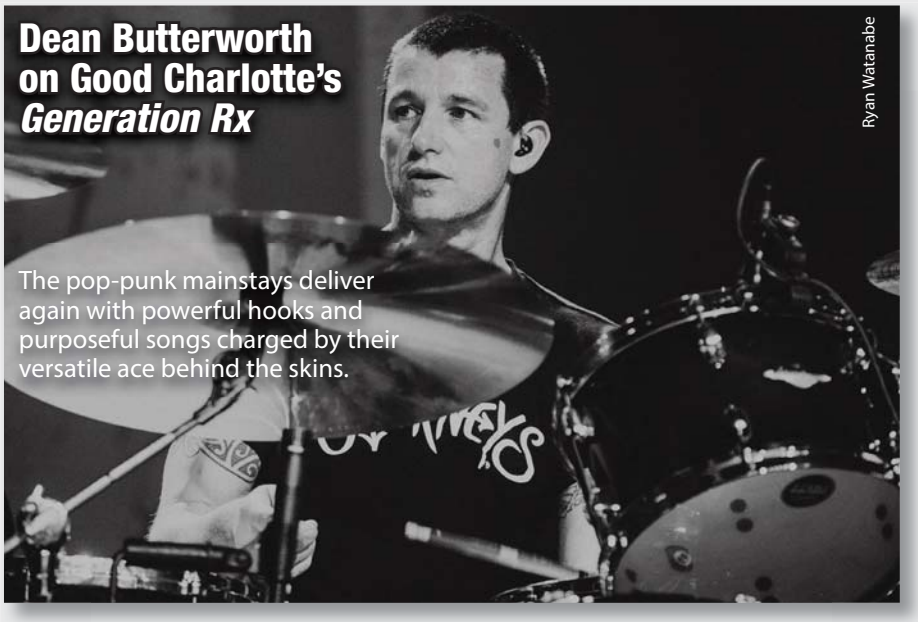
OUT NOW

Dean Butterworth on Good Charlotte's *Generation Rx*


Ryan Watanabe

The pop-punk mainstays deliver again with powerful hooks and purposeful songs charged by their versatile ace behind the skins.

On September 14 the pop-punk hitmakers Good Charlotte released *Generation Rx*, the band's seventh studio album overall and second release after returning from a four-year hiatus in 2015. Since 2005, the studio guru Dean Butterworth has been powering the group with driving grooves, signature bulldozing fills, and a unique dynamic approach that serves the band's songs first. On Good Charlotte's latest effort, the drummer's statements prove as effective as ever.

Although *Generation Rx* was mostly recorded at the group's MDDN studios in Burbank, California, Butterworth explains that he cut the drums quickly on his own at nearby NRG studios in North Hollywood, accompanied only by a tech, producer Zakk Cervini, and the demos. "I did it in about six hours—I'm fast!" he chuckles. "But I do a lot of session work, and depending on who it is, like if it's my band, I can work at the pace that I want to with the producer. These days the band usually doesn't come in, and I kind of prefer it that way so that I can focus. I have the tunes, and I'll short-form them, and then we might go over ideas. But a lot of it is talked through on the demos beforehand. I find that with anything I do—especially with this—to keep the energy and excitement, I like to get a song in one to three takes. For me at least, that's where you get the most impact and energy—if you can get it done."

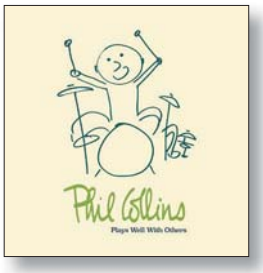
Butterworth's dynamic waves ebb and flow throughout each song on *Generation Rx*—a reflection of the importance he puts on touch and orchestration in the studio. Check out the album's first single, "Actual Pain," for evidence of how Butterworth builds intensity into the choruses, following each verse's steady ascent. "I'm a firm believer that if you hit any drum too hard, you pinch it," he says. "There's a sweet spot on a drum that allows the mic to get that perfect sound. I think sometimes you can hit a drum at a medium velocity and it can sound bigger than if you hit it as hard as you can. It's the same with cymbals. But generally in terms of dynamics in the studio, I always look at it like it's a conversation. If you're playing a crash/ride or open hi-hat and you're just hammering, it's like you're screaming at someone the whole time."

Butterworth's signature, no-frills single-stroke fills light transitions ablaze throughout the record. Check out the rapid 32nd notes that he sprays around the kit at the 2:23 mark in "Shadowboxer," or the massive phrases that erupt throughout "Actual Pain." To make his fills stand out, Butterworth focuses on an approach that he shares with another rock drumming giant. "I grew up in Laguna Beach with Taylor Hawkins from Foo Fighters, and we've been friends since we were little kids," he explains. "We often talk about dynamics and stamina. He once said, 'When I play a fill, I like to really attack it, and then I relax more and let the mic do the work on the grooves.' I just saw him play at [the German music festival] Rock am Ring. I sat by his kit during his set and was watching him do that, and we talked about it afterward. I think all of those details are really important. And that's why players like Taylor and Stewart Copeland and Dave Grohl—when they play a fill, it's in your face. There's no weakness, and you can hear everything. It's definite."

Willie Rose

Dean Butterworth uses Tama drums and hardware, Paiste cymbals, Promark drumsticks, and Evans drumheads.

More New Releases



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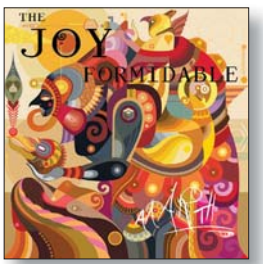

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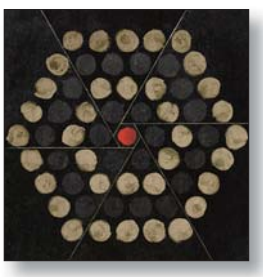

Thrice
Palms (Riley Breckenridge)

Medeski, Martin and Wood with Alarm Will Sound
Omnisphere (Billy Martin)

ON TOUR

Jason Bowld with Bullet for My Valentine

The British rock and session veteran joins the seasoned heavy-metal aces on their defining new album and supporting worldwide trek.

Following lengthy stints with the established U.K. alternative groups Pitchshifter, Killing Joke, and Pop Will Eat Itself, Jason Bowld recently officially joined British modern-metal titans Bullet for My Valentine. The group's latest full-length, *Gravity*, is the first to feature Bowld, who began touring full-time with the band in 2015 when original drummer Michael "Moose" Thomas took time off from the band.

Leading up to the release of *Gravity*, Bullet for My Valentine began 2018 with an arena tour supporting Avenged Sevenfold. This was followed by appearances at numerous European summer festivals, where the band was typically billed within the top five acts. They're currently on an extensive international tour that lasts through the fall of 2018. "We started [this leg] on June 1 at Rock am Ring in Germany," says Bowld, "and it's been mind-blowing. There were 85,000 people for the first two German shows, and that kind of takes your breath away. Download Festival in the U.K. is also a massive show for us, being main support to Avenged Sevenfold on the main stage. The ambition of Bullet is to headline these festivals in the not-too-distant future."

Bowld explains that the group faced some challenges when selecting songs to perform from among their singles and six full-length albums. "To make the set more diverse," he says, "we've got four new tracks in there: 'Don't Need You,' 'Over It,' 'Piece of Me,' and 'Letting You Go.' And there are also a lot of top-end singles in the set. There's a good spread of songs from the band's whole repertoire. There are at least two or three songs from each album, but it's a more diverse set now because we have the new stuff."

Bowld, who describes himself less as a metal drummer than as "a rock drummer with metal influences," says that he prefers not to rely on electronics on his double-bass touring kit. "Triggers are more hassle than they're worth," he says. "You have to have a certain technique to make them work. I like to play very powerfully and for everything to sound clean and consistent and precise to my ear before it gets to the PA."

A left-handed drummer playing on a right-handed kit, Bowld employs an open-handed approach. "I lead with my right hand when I'm grooving," he explains, "and I lead fills with both hands. I'm fairly ambidextrous in that way. I actually think that my left foot is stronger than my right, even though my right foot is the dominant one."

Bowld, who was tapped for his first U.K. arena tour with Bullet for My Valentine back in 2010—seven years before officially joining the band—professes a solid, workhorse mentality when it comes to landing big gigs. "I was basically asked if I could fill in [for that first arena tour] with two days' notice and no rehearsals," he says, "and the first show was at Wembley Stadium. I just said yes and thought about how I was going to do it after the phone call. If you don't take these opportunities, you don't know when the next one is going to come around, if ever. I knew that by taking the gig, it would open up doors—and it did. It opened up doors to other bands in the session world, and then five or six years later, I'm back with Bullet. You reap what you sow, basically." **Ben Meyer**

Jason Bowld plays Pearl drums and Paiste cymbals, and he uses Vic Firth sticks, Evans heads, Protection Racket stick bags, Baskey drum rugs, Cympad dampeners, and sE Electronics microphones.

Also on the Road

Bruce Smith with Public Image Ltd /// **Marcus Lee** with Kobra and the Lotus /// **Andrew "Pinch" Pinching** with the Damned /// **Butch Vig** with Garbage /// **Dan Haggis** with the Wombats /// **John Dolmayan** with System of a Down /// **Brendan Canty** with MC5 /// **Keith Carlock** with Steely Dan

Aquiles Priester

"The Temple of Hate" (Angra)

VIDEO
moderndrummer.com

There are many striking facets to Brazilian powerhouse drummer Aquiles Priester's drum-cam YouTube offering, from the vivid red cymbals and drumheads to the incredible control and precision of his playing. Shot in HD with multiple cameras in March of 2018 at Adair Daufembach's studio in Hollywood, California, Priester's video finds him ripping through his band Angra's furious "Temple of Hate" from 2004's *Temple of Shadows*. He demonstrates all the chops and musicality needed to execute the track, without looking like he's breaking a sweat.

"I researched among my fans which songs from [the album] they wanted to see and hear me play," Priester tells *MD*. "I decided to take the opportunity and record 'The Temple of Hate' in one take. I wanted the energy of a live take, so I used a floor monitor with miked-up bass drums and backing tracks. I only stopped once or twice when I thought I could obtain a better take, but that was overzealousness on my part."

Bursting out of the gate with hard cymbal chokes and a double-time pattern, Priester lays into his kit with aggressiveness and fervor. The drummer is doubling and complementing some virtuosic guitar work here, and there's not one second to catch your breath, as new drum part after new drum part comes quickly in succession—a two-handed ride fill here and unbelievably tight double-bass work there.

When asked about how his approach to the song's drum composition evolved over the past fourteen years, Priester offers, "I did change it a little, but to a higher degree of difficulty, especially on the guitar solo. Heavy metal fans don't understand the term 'less is more'; it is *always* more, and that is what I deliver. I never change a part to make it simpler. I always add more notes and make things more complicated. They like that! And then they want to see that performed live, faithfully."

The track is a perfect mix of Iron Maiden and Dream Theater influences, but Priester throws in some unexpected spices, as in a wicked ride-bell polyrhythm at the 2:41 mark, which he returns to during the guitar solo. "That is a reference to the blues rhythm," says Priester. "If you play the grooves on the snares as ghost notes, you will understand the pulse."

Of note is the beautiful audio and video quality. "Adair knows exactly how to record and produce my work, making it sound even better than the studio original," says Priester. "He delivered an avalanche of sound in a simple drum video. And the video was done by another friend and former drum student of mine from Brazil, Arthur Galvão."

And what's with all the red? "Last year Evans asked me to try out the Red [Hydraulic] drumheads, and I loved the quality of the sound and their durability," Priester says. "Paiste launched the Color Sound cymbal line at last year's NAMM, and I had already envisioned a red kit. I spoke with Erik Paiste, and he loved the idea, since I was going on tour with W.A.S.P.'s classic album *Re-Idolized*—the main color of which is also red. So everything worked out extremely well." **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Angel Olsen's Josh Jaeger

Ho JunYu

After five years of steady touring and recording with the indie-folk singer-songwriter Angel Olsen—including a fifteen-month tour cycle behind 2016's *My Woman*—Josh Jaeger is shifting gears. With Olsen using 2018 to focus on solo shows and writing for a new album, Jaeger is devoting his energies to Lionlimb, a project he started with former Olsen collaborator Stewart Bronaugh.

The duo released their second album, *Tape Recorder*, in February. It's a collection of meditative and melodic compositions centered around Bronaugh's just-above-a-whisper voice (similar to the late Elliott Smith) and sparse string arrangements. At times Jaeger's drums provide a pleasing counterpoint to Bronaugh's mostly downtempo songs. In other spots, his rhythms tumble across wide-open spaces, as he shifts time signatures gracefully and delivers fills that sometimes stagger but always land in a way that enhances the song.

"We're hoping to maybe build some buzz around this record and get a booking agent and try to bring it on the road a bit more," Jaeger says of Lionlimb. "I'm privileged to live in New York, where there are enough opportunities to play out with a band, so it feels like we're making progress and fine-tuning the live show without stagnating. If we do get the opportunity to bring it on the road, our chops are up, and it's not like starting from zero."

Working the clubs to establish Lionlimb is much different from Jaeger's road situation with Olsen, who consistently headlines theaters and enjoys prime slots at major festivals like Coachella. What's similar is the gear Jaeger uses in both live and studio situations with Olsen, Lionlimb, and any other artist he finds himself working with. He says he tends to use the same tools "give or take a few drums or maybe switching out some cymbals."

One cymbal that always ends up in his bag these days is his 22" Sabian XSR Monarch ride. "I don't go anywhere without that," he says of the riveted cymbal, which is part of Sabian's Big and Ugly line. "I feel like it really is an essential part of my sound at this point. And in New York, where you're always struggling to bring as little as possible to gigs, I just use it as my one all-purpose, all-coverage crash/ride. What's cool about it is that it opens up really beautifully if you crash on it, but there's a pretty quick decay. So I like to use it behind singers—because I can make a statement, and then it gets out of the way."

Another must-have in Jaeger's rig: his Ludwig Acrolite snare—which he says he kept going back to in favor of countless other high-quality drums while making *My Woman*—paired with a Snareweight M80. "I do tune [the Acrolite] differently depending on the gig," Jaeger says. "You can get a super-good crack out of it, if you want something more like a James Brown vibe. Or you can tune it real low and gushy, and it's at home in a ballad or a Fleetwood Mac–type tune. And the Snareweight, combined with my touch, provides this really soft, dynamic muffling that allows you to get a lot of tone out of the drum. It's magnetic, and you can alter how much muffling you want very quickly. I use it as a way to get a lot of sounds out of one drum, especially live with Angel."

Jaeger's must-haves aren't limited to his gear. A coffee enthusiast, he always brings a hand grinder for beans and an Aeropress coffee maker on tour. And clearing his head by meditating before a show is a priority, so he frequently uses the Headspace guided meditation app on his smartphone.

"I've found that even more than warming up my hands, meditating tends to get me centered and ready to go for the gig above all else," he says. "You walk up on the stage sort of neutral or fresh. You're not burnt out by all the worries of the day or by having listened to forty-five songs in the green room before you've gone onstage.

"Our job, above all else," Jaeger adds, "is to listen really intently, really openly, and to be able to respond to whatever is being thrown at us by the people onstage. And if you're distracted, or you have a million other thoughts or sounds ringing in your head, it's difficult to do that. If you can find the time and space to [meditate], I think it's a game changer."

Patrick Berkery

Indispensables

- 22" Sabian XSR Monarch ride cymbal
- Ludwig Acrolite snare
- Snareweight M80
- hand coffee grinder and AeroPress coffee maker
- Headspace guided meditation app

Ddrum

Dios Series Snares

A well-conceived trio of deep wood and metal models designed to deliver distinct but useful tones.

Though it was originally introduced in 2008 as ddrum's flagship all-maple professional series, the Dios line was shelved in 2012 while the company explored other ideas. The series was revived earlier this year with a few limited shell packs—we reviewed the five-piece 522 configuration in the March 2018 issue—and now a trio of Dios snares is available: the 6.5x14 Maple Zebra ($499), the 6.5x14 Hand Hammered Bronze ($519), and the 7x14 Cast Steel ($579). We were sent all three to review. Let's check them out.

6.5x14 Maple Zebra

Built from the same North American maple as Dios kicks and toms, the 6.5x14 Maple Zebra snare has an 8-ply/8 mm shell with a very cool multiple-layered striped lacquer finish. The top bearing edge is cut cleanly to a thirty-degree angle for a denser sound created by more shell-to-head contact, while the bottom side has a sharper forty-five-degree edge for increased snare response.

The drum is outfitted with ten of ddrum's classic bullet-style tube lugs, die-cast hoops, and a simple perpendicular-action throw-off that was smooth and stable. All the tension rods feature plastic insulators between the hoop and metal washer, and the drumheads included a single-ply coated batter by Evans and a thin, single-ply bottom. The twenty-strand snappy-style wires are held in place on the throw-off and butt plate via high-quality woven-fabric straps. The snare beds in the shell are subtle, but they're deep enough to allow the wires to sit flush against the resonant head to provide maximum sensitivity and minimum sympathetic buzz.

Whether tuned high, medium, or low, the 6.5x14 Maple Zebra snare had exceptional response and a clean, open, warm tone. Of the three Dios drums we tested, this was the most applicable to a variety of playing styles and dynamic levels. Cranked high, it had a ton of cut and a dense, woody tone that would serve contemporary R&B, pop, modern jazz, fusion, and funk drummers well. At medium and lower tunings, the drum produced a lot more overtones, which could be fine-tuned so that their sound sat within the overall mix or tamped down easily with just a touch of muffling. Every drummer needs at least one high-quality 6.5x14 wood snare, and this is a great, affordable option.

6.5x14 Hand Hammered Bronze

If you're someone who likes a snare with a ton of depth and wide-ranging tone, the Dios 6.5x14 Hammered Bronze is for you. It boasts a heavy 1.5 mm bronze shell with golf ball–size indentations across the entire surface. The bearing edges are crimped to forty-five degrees, and the snare beds are

6.5x14 Maple Zebra

6.5x14 Hand Hammered Bronze

slight but effective. It has die-cast hoops, ten bullet-style tube lugs, and the same heads, throw-off, and wires as the Maple Zebra.

Whereas the Maple Zebra drum had a clean, pure tone, the Hand Hammered Bronze sprayed overtones across a wider frequency range, and they sang out longer between strokes. With strategic tuning and snare wire tension I was able to balance out the attack and overtones without killing the drum's sonorous voice. Higher tunings favored looser snare wires so that the length of the rattle matched that of the sustain, while lower tunings sounded best when the wires were tightly bound against the bottom head to help control the overtones. Muffling could be used to eliminate the ring, but that strategy would only mute this drum's big, robust voice.

7x14 Cast Steel

The Dios Hammered Bronze is a hefty drum (13 lbs.), but the 7x14 Cast Steel is an absolute beast (17.5 lbs.). It boasts a 3 mm straight shell (no flanges) with sharp forty-five degree bearing edges, a mirror-chrome finish, and wide, flat snare beds. Like the other two drums, it has die-cast hoops, bullet-style tube lugs, and a simple but effective throw-off.

This drum had the hardest bite at higher tunings, with bright but controlled overtones. Medium and lower tunings might require a bit of dampening because the overtones tended to center on specific frequencies that could clash with the music. (Contrast that with the complexity of the Hammered Bronze's overtones, which sat within the mix more naturally.) This is one of the most powerful drums I've ever come across. So if you're in need of a drum that can slice through any sonic mix, see if you can get your hands on one of these for a test run. It kicks.

Michael Dawson

7x14 Cast Steel

Legado Cymbals

Heritage, 79V, Luxo Raw, and Caspian Series

A newcomer in the handmade-cymbal market keeps a keen eye on the tastes and budgets of everyday working drummers.

Although it's only existed since May of 2017, Legado Cymbals has captured the attention of many drummers looking for musically rich, inspiring sounds that won't break the bank. The company is based in California, but the instruments are handmade by top artisans in Turkey. We were sent samples from four of the manufacturer's six series in order to get an idea of what Legado cymbals are all about. Let's dig in.

Heritage Series

The Heritage series is Legado's most versatile, diverse, and classic Turkish-style range. Sizes include 8", 10", and 12" splashes; 13"–16" hi-hats; 16"–20" crashes; 20"–24" rides; and 14" and 16"–20" Chinas. Each model is available in different weights and tones (bright or dark), and FX versions of the crashes, which feature 1" and 5" holes, are optional. These cymbals are hand hammered and lathed from the base of the bell to the edge. They have a fairly flat profile, and the bells are left raw.

We received an oversized setup comprising 16" Bright hi-hats, a 20" Paper-Thin crash, a 22" Paper-Thin FX crash (with holes), and a 22" Thin ride. The hi-hats have a medium-thin top and a medium bottom. The 20" and 22" crashes and 22" ride are very flexible, so they have a soft feel with a lot of give and wobble.

All four models have consistent sonic qualities that include the warm, expressive, and complex tonality that's made Turkish cymbals so highly coveted, yet they have a distinctly modern flavor as well. The 16" hi-hats combine a soft, papery attack and deep, breathy sustain with more clarity and crispness than you'd usually get from such a large, thin pairing. I was also impressed by the lack of murky low-mid overtones, especially when playing the hi-hats partially or fully open. While I often prefer to use large hi-hats like these when playing drums by themselves, rarely can I find a comfortable spot for them within a mix with other instruments. These 16" Heritage hi-hats sounded clear and cozy in a variety of styles, from jazz to hip-hop to classic rock.

The 20" Paper-Thin crash had a clean, warm sound with a hint of trashiness and a slightly controlled decay. The 22" Thin ride had a bit more sparkle, and the wash was breathier and more complex. The bells on both cymbals were highly musical, with just enough high overtones to cut above the wash without sounding too abrupt.

The 22" FX crash had alternating stripes of .5" and 1" holes radiating out from the bell. The holes shortened the decay and added a powerful, trashy attack, but the cymbal still had a deep and musical tone. I could use it for single accents to punctuate figures and fills, or I could crash on it repeatedly for a washy white-noise effect that was aggressive but not overwhelming.

79V Series

The 79V series comprises quicker, darker, and tighter sounds for drummers looking for drier and more stylized options. Like the Heritage series, a full range of 79V splashes, hi-hats, crashes, rides, and Chinas are available. The bells are raw and heavily hammered, and the bows are widely lathed, giving these cymbals a more unusual

appearance. These cymbals have a slightly steeper profile and a firmer feel.

Our review samples included 15" Bright hi-hats, a 19" Paper-Thin crash, and a 24" Paper-Thin ride. The bells on the hi-hats are smaller than those on the Heritage series, increasing control. The 79V hi-hats also have more high-end shimmer and a smooth, silvery tone, which gives them a brighter overall sound while retaining a soft and buttery feel.

The crash and ride had smoother and focused overtones and a slightly muted attack. The 19" crash opened up with a nice, flashy attack when hit hard, but it decayed quickly, as if a piece of tape had been applied to the underside of the bow. The 24" Paper-Thin ride had a nice mix of high-end detail, breathy sustain, and smooth, controlled decay. Most thin 24" rides I've come across are super fun to play but can get overbearing at higher dynamics. The 79V 24" Paper-Thin ride, however, provided a nice bed of warmth and wash while leaving plenty of sonic space in the low and middle registers for the rest of the kit.

Luxo Raw and Caspian Series

Some of the most unusual pieces in Legado's catalog are in the Luxo Raw and Caspian series. The Luxo Raw models are only lathed on the bottom and are described as being "trashy, dry, and defined with a fast decay." The Caspian series are raw on both sides and have a dark, earthy tone.

From these two series we were only sent a few choice models, including a 20" Luxo Raw Paper-Thin crash, a 16" Luxo Raw FX hi-hat bottom, and a pair of 16" Caspian Dark FX hi-hats. The 20" Luxo Raw crash has a deep tone, smooth decay, and punchy attack. It's a bit more controlled than a typical 20" thin crash, so you can get nice definition from the bow and bell for riding without the sustain sounding stifled or choked. This was my favorite cymbal of the samples we reviewed because it produced a big and powerful crash that was also focused and contained, making it ideal for recording.

The 16" Luxo Raw FX hi-hat, featuring 1" holes in the bow, was sent as an alternative bottom cymbal with the Heritage top. In that application, the Luxo Raw created a stronger foot chick and a denser and crisper stick sound, which translated into better articulation and tighter sustain.

The 16" Caspian Dark FX hi-hats feature 1" holes in the bottom cymbal and a mix of 1" and .5" holes in the top arranged in a bowtie pattern to allow for imperforated playing areas in opposing quadrants. The top cymbal is medium, and the bottom is medium-heavy. These hi-hats have a very dark, tight, and trashy sound that could be used as a secondary ride source for tight, stack-like sounds or as a primary sound when going for a distorted, lo-fi vibe. I was surprised by how responsive they were; there's quite a bit of nuance to be explored via foot tension, playing dynamics, and where the cymbals are struck (edge versus bow or bell). I can see many of today's modern jazz explorers, like Chris Dave, Eric Harland, Marcus Gilmore, and Justin Brown, getting a lot of mileage out of these odd yet highly expressive instruments.

Prices range from $72 for an 8" splash to $280 for a 24" ride. Check out more of what Legado offers, including the bright and crisp Royalty line, at legadocymbals.com.

Michael Dawson

Roland

TM-6 Pro Trigger Module and RT-30 Triggers

A professional-grade, feature-laden system for blending electronics with acoustics.

To be an in-demand professional drummer these days requires not only an incredible groove, a diverse musical vocabulary, and a great-sounding drumset, but you also have to have at least a working knowledge of electronics, especially when it comes to incorporating loops and samples into a live show.

Roland has been the leader in the electronic drumming world for decades, especially in regards to full e-kits. But over the past few years the company has developed a catalog of products designed to serve drummers looking to create multipurpose hybrid setups that could involve sample pads, drum triggers, and backing tracks. The TM-6 Pro trigger module is the company's latest offering for hybrid drummers looking to break out of the confinements of a multipad to build a more customized, flexible, and versatile setup.

What Is It?

The TM-6 Pro is a 9x9x2 module loaded with 500 one-shot samples, some of which were custom-recorded at world-class studios especially for this unit. There are also 268 sounds borrowed from Roland's highly expressive V-Drums library. Eighty preset drumkits incorporating those sounds are included, and up to 1,000 original samples can be imported into the module via an SD card.

The interface of the TM-6 Pro is simple and easy to navigate. There are separate knobs for adjusting master, click, and song volume independently. And there are similar knobs for edit controls of each sample in the kit. These include volume, pitch, decay, transient attack, transient release, and effects level. Six stereo trigger inputs on the back panel allow you to use up to twelve sounds per kit, as long as you use two-zone pads and triggers or a Y cable to split the stereo input between two single-

zone devices. The module also includes inputs for a footswitch and hi-hat controller.

In addition to standard L/R master outputs and a stereo headphone jack, the TM-6 Pro includes four 1/4" mono outputs, which provide a lot of flexibility for routing the triggered sounds to different destinations, such as separate channels of a mixing board or audio interface. If you plan to use the TM-6 Pro for an advanced setup that incorporates full backing tracks, loops, and one-shot samples, you or your sound engineer will definitely appreciate having these four direct outputs so that those elements can be mixed independently of one another.

The TM-6 also has MIDI Out and USB connections for situations where you want to use the module as an audio interface or controller for other MIDI devices or software instruments.

Is It Easy to Use?

Aside from six 1" round touch pads, there isn't a way to play sounds in the TM-6 Pro without attaching triggers or pads. You can, however, use the module as a playback system for backing tracks. Simply drop WAV files of your music and their accompanying clicks (also as WAVs) to an SD card, import them into the TM-6, and press the play button. The audio output of the music is automatically routed to the headphones and main mix, while the click is routed to the headphones only. (The outputs can be routed differently, if desired.)

While the TM-6 proves to be foolproof as a stable playback system for backing tracks, the unit is much more powerful than that. (Roland's SPD::ONE WAV pad is a much more basic and affordable option if all you need to do is start and stop tracks.) What I like best about the TM-6 Pro is that it can be utilized for very different types of setups, whether they require layering triggered samples on top of acoustic drums, firing samples from drum triggers and pads while also controlling loops and tracks, or all of the above plus tweaking individual sounds with real-time effects.

I also really appreciate how easy it is to configure the TM-6 Pro to work with various Roland triggers and pads. There's a dedicated button (Trig) that opens up an edit menu where you can select the trigger type, assign sounds, and tweak the threshold and crosstalk parameters. The stock sounds comprise many modern and classic electronic drum, cymbal, percussion, and special effects samples, and there are plenty of well-produced acoustic sounds to utilize for a more natural vibe.

You can layer two sounds per trigger, and you can import up to 1,000 (or forty-eight minutes' worth) of your own samples. The volume, pitch, decay, attack/release, and effects level of each sound can be adjusted individually, and effects options include EQ, transient design, compression, reverb, tape echo, delay, flanger, phaser, distortion, bit crusher, pitch shifter, and more.

RT-30 Triggers

Although they are not included with the TM-6 Pro, we were sent a pair of RT series drum triggers to test. These included the RT-30K for the bass drum and the RT-30HR for the snare. The RT-30K is single-zone, while the RT-30HR has separate sensors for head and rim strikes. Both triggers have sturdy, low-profile plastic bodies with self-guided mounts that are shaped to allow the triggers to sit flat and flush on the hoop or rim. The thumbscrew on the back of the body holds the triggers in place very well, and the jack is positioned on the side to keep the cable out of the way.

The RT-30 series triggers performed flawlessly during our test of the TM-6 Pro, tracking dynamics very accurately. They never missed a note or misfired a sample. The upgraded, slim design of the RT-30s allowed the triggers to be positioned discreetly on the drums. Combine a few of these triggers with the TM-6 Pro module, an acoustic drumset, and a few other triggering devices—like the compact BT-1 bar pad, super-responsive PD series V-Pads, and KT series V-Kick trigger—and you'll have yourself a super-powered hybrid setup capable of handling any level of production.

Michael Dawson

ToneAlly

Percussion Teaching Tool

Sharpen your stick heights and angles with this unique tactile practice device.

If you need to improve your stick control, the ToneAlly might be a worthy addition to your practice routine. Named "best teaching tool" at the 2018 Winter NAMM Show, the ToneAlly was designed by English musician/composer Tony McNally to be a straightforward approach to developing a foundation of good sticking habits.

What Is It?

There are two ToneAlly Percussion Teaching Tools. Design 1 features a solid, one-piece playing surface, and Design 5 has a removable playing surface. Both feature 80 mm by 40 mm neoprene playing surfaces, a unique vertical structure consisting of four separate channels for drumsticks (referred to as "allys"), and a top bar that's set at a specific distance to help monitor stick heights. We received Design 5 for review. It arrived in an attractive wooden box that also included literature about the device, instructions on how to use it, and various sticking exercises.

What Does It Do?

The information card that came with the ToneAlly read: "You are now in possession of the world's first percussion teaching tool that focuses on the vertical movement of the drumstick." I'd often drawn quarter-sized circles in the middle of my practice pads to help improve my accuracy, but I had never really taken the time to analyze my sticking in terms of the controlled, disciplined, vertical movements required for high-level drumming.

This device brought much of that lack of understanding to the forefront as I fumbled through the first few exercises. This thing really worked me over! But with patience and continued practice, I gradually improved the accuracy of my stroke heights and angles. The ToneAlly showed me certain sticking issues that I didn't know existed and helped me address them efficiently.

When you remove the neoprene surface of the Design 5 version, you can use the ToneAlly on your own snare or practice pad. I tried the device while seated at the snare on my drumkit and then while standing with the ToneAlly on my favorite practice pad. For me, these were the most valuable and enjoyable ways to use the Design 5.

Lasting Impact

After spending a bit of time practicing with the ToneAlly, I was able to get some of my sticking issues under control, and I could see that my technique, accuracy, and efficiency were moving in a positive direction. Anything that helps build a solid foundation and keeps me honest is going to remain part of my practice routine for a very long time.

Design 1 sells for about $80, and Design 5 is about $100. Visit toneally.co.uk for ordering information.

Nick Amoroso

Evans

UV1 Bass Drum Heads

A durable ultraviolet-cured coated option for three of the company's most popular models.

Evans debuted its innovative ultraviolet-cured UV1 single-ply coated snare/tom drumhead in early 2017, and many drummers raved over its chip-resistant textured finish and slightly punchier tone. Earlier this year, the company added versions for bass drums, including a basic UV1 single-ply as well as UV1 versions of the popular EQ4, which has an internal muffling ring, and the EMAD, which comes with two interchangeable externally mounted foam dampeners.

UV1

Evans positions the UV1 as the third brightest-sounding bass drum head in its catalog, after the single-ply G1 Clear and G1 Coated and before the Calftone and double-ply G2 Clear. The UV1 coating is actually a thin applique that's cured to a 10-mil layer of film via ultraviolet light. This process is different from a traditional coating's application, which usually involves textured spray paint.

Compared to the G1 Coated, the UV1 has fewer super-high overtones and a slightly shorter sustain. It also holds pitch better under low tension, making it ideal for bass drum applications. I found that using two UV1 heads, with no muffling, produced a full, open, tom-like sound with a slightly meatier attack than you'd get from a pair of Coated G1s. And the pitch was a bit purer and more focused, similar to the sound you get by applying a bit of tape to a standard single-ply coated drumhead. The UV1 coating proved to be more resilient than traditional paint; even when the head was smacked for a few hours with a wooden beater, the coating showed no signs of chipping or wear.

UV EQ4

The UV EQ4 version is identical to the UV1, except that there's a muffling ring of additional film affixed to the underside of the perimeter. While having a warmer tonality than the EQ4 Clear, Frosted, and Coated options, the UV EQ4 is designed as an all-purpose drumhead for a wide variety of playing styles and tuning preferences. The muffling ring helps focus the tone and shorten the decay while still allowing the head to resonate.

The UV coating gives the drumhead stronger midrange punch. I've been a big fan of the EQ4 Frosted for many years, but the one gripe I have with that drumhead is that the coating wears off quickly at the beater impact point. When using the UV EQ4, I didn't experience that issue, and I was still able to get a deep and punchy yet not overly muffled kick drum tone.

The UV EQ4 also worked well as a resonant head, offering additional control for a deeper and more focused sound.

UV EMAD

For drummers looking for a bass drum head that provides a very modern sound with maximum punch and low end, the Evans EMAD is an ideal choice. It features a single-ply of 10-mil film and an externally mounted dampening system that allows you to affix a foam ring to the perimeter. (One-inch and two-inch rings are included.)

The UV EMAD version, which has an ultraviolet light–cured applique across the entire surface, surprised me a bit. I expected it to have even stronger attack and deeper tone than the clear version, but the UV coating actually seemed to mellow out the beater impact while also producing rounder resonance. It's still a high-impact, microphone-ready sound, but the UV EMAD was a little less scooped in the midrange and hyped in the highs and lows. The UV EMAD paired very nicely with the UV EQ4 as a resonant head for a big, robust kick sound with a solid but not too bright attack and full yet focused overtones.

Michael Dawson

GEARING UP *ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE*

Keith Urban's

Seth Rausch

Seth Rausch, who's currently touring with country superstar Keith Urban, met with *MD* to talk about his extensive setup that includes custom pieces, a bespoke snare, and a secondary electronic cocktail kit. The multitude of components was ideal for Urban's diverse set list. "Keith's shows have great energy, and a lot of elements from other genres come into play," Rausch says. "I'm happy to be playing a bigger kit, and I really love the way it feels."

Rausch's favorite drum, a 4x15 snare with a 1.5 mm steel shell and a powder-coated black finish, was designed with help from fellow Nashville drummer Mark Beckett, and it was constructed by James Beier of Beier Drums. "It's only four inches deep, but it's fat with a great response," says Seth. "It cracks. It's my main snare and one of the best drums I've ever heard." Rausch uses deadening rings to control the tone of the Beier and several other drums, and he had a custom rack welded with hooks to keep the rings organized. "I'm using 16", 15", and 13" sizes," he says. "I can easily take them off, and they're labeled for quick access."

Rausch's cymbals include new models from Zildjian's K Sweet line, an 18" EFX that provides a quick accent, and a 22" crash with holes and rivets. Seth's signature model drumstick, the SR-1 by Innovative Percussion, is a beefed-up version of the company's Legacy 3A model, which the drummer uses for studio work.

Rausch relies on the electronic components of his kit mostly to introduce certain songs. "The first verse of 'The Fighter,' for example, has a triggered kick and snare," he says. "So that groove sounds electronic before I go to the main kit."

At one point doing the show, Rausch, Urban, and bassist Jerry Flowers leave the main stage to play a fifteen-minute set on a satellite platform, which includes a stand-up electronic drumset. "We bought a bunch of Gibraltar rack parts and made this kit with six Roland SPD::ONEs, a KT-10 kick pedal trigger, and a TM-2 sound module," says Rausch. "We loaded it with samples of my main kit." Gen16 cymbals, including an 18" crash and 14" hi-hats, complete the setup. "It looks like a blown-up electronic xylophone or drum machine," Rausch chuckles.

Drums: Gretsch Broadkaster in black satin finish
A. 4x15 Beier steel snare
B. 6.5x13 hammered bronze snare
C. 7x12 concert tom with Pearl Tru-Trac electronic head and Roland BT-1 bar trigger pad
D. 6x8 concert tom
E. 6x10 concert tom
F. 8x12 tom
G. 9x13 tom
H. 16x16 floor tom
I. 14x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 15" K Sweet hi-hats
2. 18" A EFX crash
3. 19" K Sweet crash
4. 21" K Sweet ride
5. 20" K Dark crash
6. 22" A crash customized with holes and rivets

Heads: Remo Emperor Coated batter on 15" snare with Ambassador Hazy snare side, Ambassador X batter on 13" snare with Ambassador Hazy snare side, Emperor Coated concert tom batters, Ambassador X tom batters and Ambassador Clear resonants, Powerstroke P3 Coated bass drum batter and Powerstroke P3 Black Suede on front

Hardware: Gibraltar, Roc-N-Soc throne

Sticks: Innovative Percussion SR-1

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX, KT-10 kick trigger pedal, and BT-1 bar trigger pad; 12" Pearl Tru-Trac electronic head; Shure microphones

Accessories/Percussion: Big Fat Snare Drum dampening rings in various sizes, LP cowbell, and Innovative Percussion bass drum beater

Interview by Brandy Laurel McKenzie

Photos by Sean O'Halloran

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Sam Lay

The legendary drummer with Little Walter, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker, Willie Dixon, and Paul Butterfield has been inducted into the Blues and Jazz Halls of Fame, was present for two of the most important chapters in Bob Dylan's career, and as a founding member of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

On early dreams of stardom

My ambition was to become a track-and-field star, but I guess it didn't turn out that way. I still enjoy watching track-and-field competition on any level, really. The drums came about later.

On the Chicago music scene of the '50s and '60s

It was booming: clubs, crowds, music, and bands playing right next to each other. I wasn't a full-time drummer [when I arrived], because I had a job working at the Sealtest Dairy. I really became a professional in 1953, '54, with a local jazz outfit named the Moondog Combo. That's where I got my start and learned about keeping time and all. My first notable gig in Chicago was in 1960 with Hound Dog Taylor.

On the bandleader who made the biggest impression on him

Now, that's a real hard question to answer. I was impressed with all of them, because they all stood out. In fact, every time I sat in, I'd get an offer to join the band! One leader would offer me, say, one dollar more than the last gig, so how could I refuse? [laughs] Actually, I stayed with Wolf longer than anybody. It wasn't about the money; I just liked playing with him and fell in love with his music. As for John Lee Hooker, I also play guitar, and I still play several of his songs. I copied them exactly like you'd hear on his records, note for note.

On his famous "double-shuffle" beat

I put that beat together when I went to sanctified church. It just sounded right, you know? I don't know how to express it. Let me put it this way: "I just do it."

On the most memorable of his forty-plus recordings released by the famous Chess Records label

I would say Muddy Waters' *Fathers and Sons* was the most memorable. But there's a story to that: I did the whole album—every song and the live concert. I mean everything. But somebody else [Buddy Miles] got the credit on the album. I don't know who was responsible, but I want to set the record straight. That was just plain wrong!

On influencing drumming greats like Jim Keltner and Levon Helm

Oh, man, I feel blessed if I made a mark out there, and I'm honored to even be mentioned in their company.

On performing with Bob Dylan during his iconic Newport "electric" gig in '65 and on his famed *Highway 61 Revisited* album

The *Highway 61* session: I believe [Dylan manager] Albert Grossman asked me if I wanted to record with him. I said, "Who the hell is Bob Dylan—I never heard of him!" The only thing I knew was the song "Like a Rolling Stone," which I still love. It wasn't until after the session was over that I got to know who he was. After that, he was like family. He's a great person, one of the best around.

The Newport gig was hot. We all hung out backstage, and I got to play with anybody who needed a drummer. Cats like Skip James, Son House, you name it. Although it was a controversial day for Bob, the band…well…we had a ball.

On the Paul Butterfield Blues Band's self-titled 1965 debut album, for which he's given credit for helping start the blues-rock revolution

I'd like to think that, musically speaking, we broke a lot of ground. Whatever it was or is, if it was good, it was all me! [laughs]

On whether, if he had the chance, he'd do anything differently

I don't believe I could have done anything different. I had my own sound, which is a mixture of many sounds from other people—like one big bowl of soup. I'm not what I used to be, but I still am. I'm like a Timex watch: I take a licking and keep on kicking.

Sam Lay endorses Pearl drums, Regal Tip sticks, and Remo heads.

Interview by Bob Girouard

Paul Natkin

Nick Mason

Pink Floyd's drummer surprises onstage and on record by revisiting the past but keeping an ear to the future.

by Adam Budofsky

Jill Furmanovsky

It's safe to say that fans of psychedelic pioneers Pink Floyd and their cofounder Nick Mason weren't expecting the sonic riches that have been bestowed upon them this year. It's also safe to say that neither was Nick himself, at least not until fairly recently.

"Yeah, I decided to go back to work," Mason tells *Modern Drummer* with a laugh, "though I didn't really mean to take it this seriously." On August 31, Warner Bros. Records released the three albums the drummer has recorded as a leader, both individually and collected in the box set *Unattended Luggage*. Comprising 1981's *Fictitious Sports*, a blowout featuring Carla Bley, Steve Swallow, Robert Wyatt, and other stylistically slippery musical heavies; 1985's *Profiles*, a collaboration with 10cc guitarist Rick Fenn; and 1987's *White of the Eye*, the long-unavailable soundtrack to Donald Cammell's desert mystery of the same name, the box set makes a case for Mason being the Floyd's least predictable member, after the band's iconic original singer, songwriter, and guitarist, Syd Barrett. Whether within the boundaries of *Profiles*' proggy new wave, *Sports*' jaunty modern jazz-with-vocals, or *White of the Eye*'s Americana-tinged mood music, Mason the solo artist compels less as a stylist than as a good-natured musical explorer, embracing the strengths of his playmates and allowing each unique musical environment to nudge him where it may. Whatever aural locale Mason and his cohorts end up in, it's usually not where we'd expect.

Arguably even more unanticipated, 2018 has found the drummer leading his own live band, Nick Mason's Saucerful of Secrets, featuring guitarist and singer Lee Harris, Pink Floyd live bassist Guy Pratt, and Spandau Ballet singer Gary Kemp. Named after Pink Floyd's 1968 sophomore album—or perhaps its title track, a Mason favorite that features an early example of looped drums—the new band will be, as you're reading this, wrapping up a month of European performances featuring interpretations of early Floyd material. We spoke to Mason soon after the group played a handful of introductory shows in London.

MD: How did the album reissues and your new band dovetail?

Nick: I have to say there was an element of luck in that, because I actually started on the idea of rereleasing *Profiles* two or three years ago. Rick Fenn, who copiloted on that, was very keen to see it out again, and Warner Bros. took a long time to even find the tapes. Then they came up with the idea of doing something with all the solo stuff in one package, which I thought was great.

The band concept has been much more fast-track. That kicked off earlier this year with Lee Harris suggesting it to Guy Pratt, and Guy suggesting it to me. Then Gary Kemp said he'd love to do it, and more or less within weeks we set up some rehearsal time, played a bit, and thought, "Yeah, this is fun—let's do it."

MD: Looking at the set list you've been playing, it would seem that you haven't done some of this material in quite a while.

Nick: You're right. Some of it has *never* been performed before. There are singles and B-sides that were never actually played live, or if they were, it was very rarely, or done in the early Syd days. That's a great bonus for us, because it gives us what amounts to fresh music to develop.

MD: How do you approach songs that go back to the very beginning of the band? Pink Floyd evolved so much over time.

Nick: It's interesting, they still have qualities that make them fairly easy to get to grips with; curiously they have an element of Pink Floyd that has sort of run through the band for fifty years. I think it's partly that Syd's writing probably influenced everything else we ever did. So it hangs together. Perhaps some songs are less likely to work for us. "Bike" I think does work, whereas I'm not sure that "The Gome" would. I think "Arnold Layne" still fits. Some of the songs really need to be played more or less as they were originally played, while others are really a vehicle for playing slightly differently every night.

MD: Do you feel that there are definitive versions of these songs?

Nick: I actually think it's quite an important element that there *shouldn't* be definitive versions. Every time you play there should be a sort of freshness to it and the opportunity to try and find something else in the songs. We wanted very much not to be a tribute band, and not to try to recreate every detail of some specific recording or attempt to sing it exactly like Syd did. The singing should be done as Gary sings. So there's inevitably a reinterpretation.

MD: What about revisiting songs that you haven't done in a while, from a drumming standpoint?

Nick: Well, the obvious challenge is: elderly drummer, loss of memory, can't remember how the song went let alone what the drum part was. [laughs] But that of course makes it more fun. Some of it comes back and some of it…you just sort of fall into it. But the interesting thing is how, quite often, there are little bits and pieces that are quite special. Either I've forgotten them, or Syd wrote them in a way that's more complex than I'd remembered. One verse might be a slightly different length to another, that sort of thing. It's quite a memory test when things like that come up.

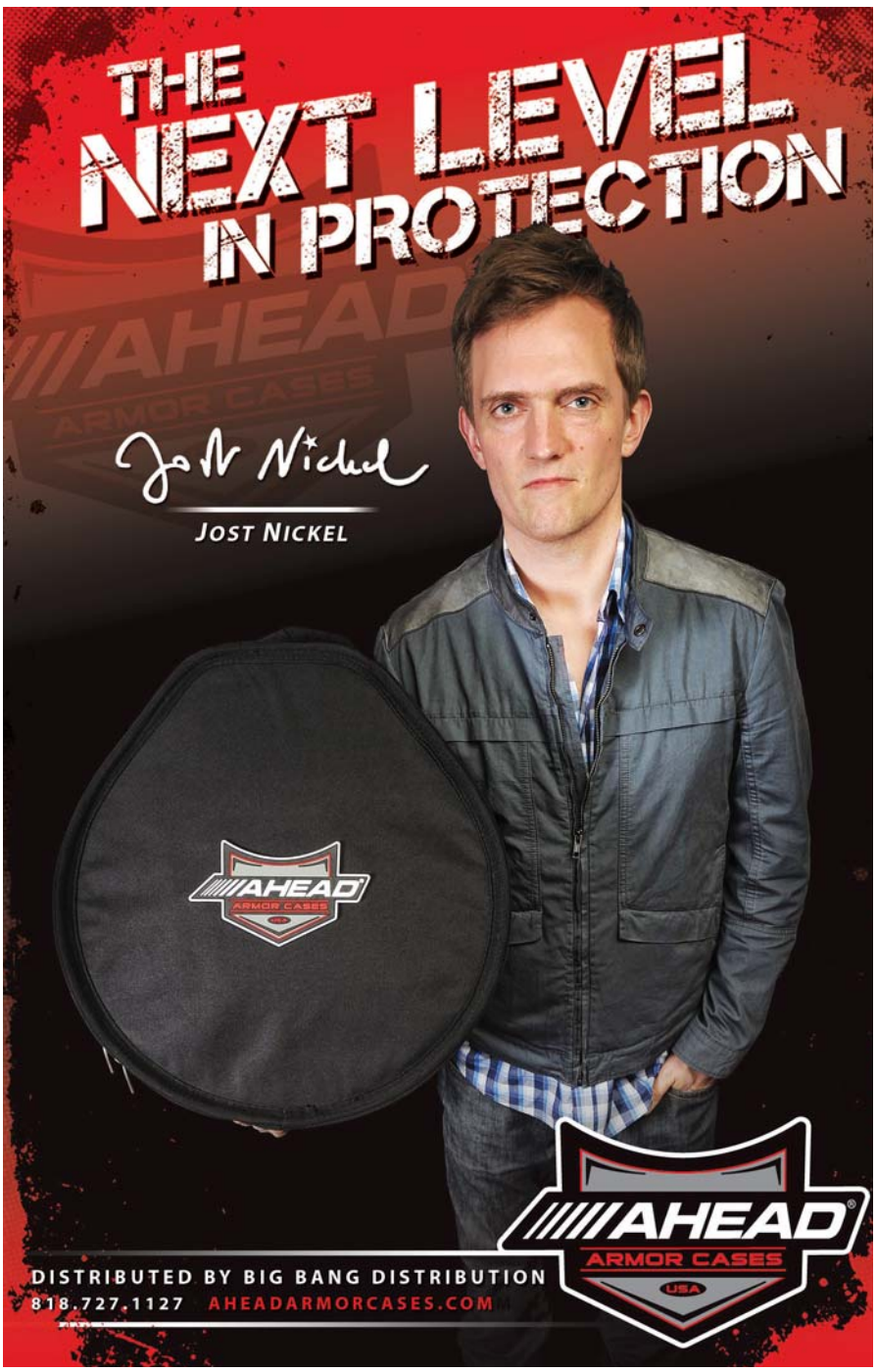
MD: Some fans will be unfamiliar with the soundtrack to the film *White of the Eye*. How did that project come along, and did you approach it differently from the way you'd approached the soundtracks that Pink Floyd had previously done, like *The Valley* and *More*?

Nick: It was different mainly because the technology had moved on a lot. The gestation of the soundtrack was that Donald Cammell was brought in by the record company to make a music video for the track "Lie for a Lie" from *Profiles*. I think he'd just finished shooting *White of the Eye*, and he said, "Do you want to come and have a look at doing music for this movie?" I don't think it had much of a lifespan as a movie. It's quite a dark piece. But I was happy to put music on it.

By the time we were doing that project, we could actually do it in a home studio. When Pink Floyd was doing the Barbet Schroeder films twenty years before that, it was a very different operation. They had to be done in a studio with time code and stopwatches and [the] rest of it. *White of the Eye* was the beginning of hard drives and floppy disks. So it could be done in a much more contained environment.

MD: What state were the visuals in when you started to work on the music?

Nick: The film was pretty well finished.



MD: So you had an exact idea of the scene you were trying to illustrate.

Nick: And Donald would steer us pretty well. What the director thinks tends to be the best way to go.

MD: Do you find soundtrack work as enjoyable as making albums?

Nick: Definitely. What's great about a movie soundtrack is that maybe it's just thirty seconds of atmosphere that you're creating, or you have to do crossfades of quite often very short sections. That's fun to try to get right. It's so different from establishing the structure of a song.

MD: It's sometimes hard to tell whether we're hearing acoustic or programmed drums on the music.

Nick: It's a real odd mix of acoustic drums and drum machines. As a drummer I felt it was my duty to at least press the start and stop buttons on the drum machine rather than let someone else do it. [laughs] I think that we've fortunately rather moved on from that.

MD: The *Fictitious Sports* record is very different. That was recorded in the States, correct?

Nick: Yes, it was recorded at Carla Bley and Mike Mantler's Grog Kill Studio in Woodstock, New York.

MD: And was it more of a live recording?

Nick: There was overdubbing but not an enormous amount. The brass sections were done on another pass. Chris Spedding came in later to do the guitar parts. And Robert [Wyatt] recorded his vocals in the U.K.

MD: It's such an interesting group of songs. They're very different from one another, and there's an element of fun to some of them.

Nick: It almost a comedy record! It was good fun to do.

MD: Pink Floyd is often cited as being influential on subsequent bands. As you were making these records, were you listening to any music that may have influenced *your* approach?

Nick: I think you're influenced by almost everything you hear. I'm not at all sure how much influence we had on other people, though. We've done a lot of stuff, but in some ways I think we found a peculiar niche. I'm not quite sure how much of that spread out elsewhere.

MD: Perhaps it's beyond the music itself; even to younger bands, Pink Floyd seems to represent a certain level of creativity that can be achieved within rock music.

Nick: I suppose it's the freedom to do more or less exactly what you want without the sense that the record company or any other outside forces are going to guide you in any way.

Nick Mason plays DW drums, Paiste cymbals, and Promark sticks.

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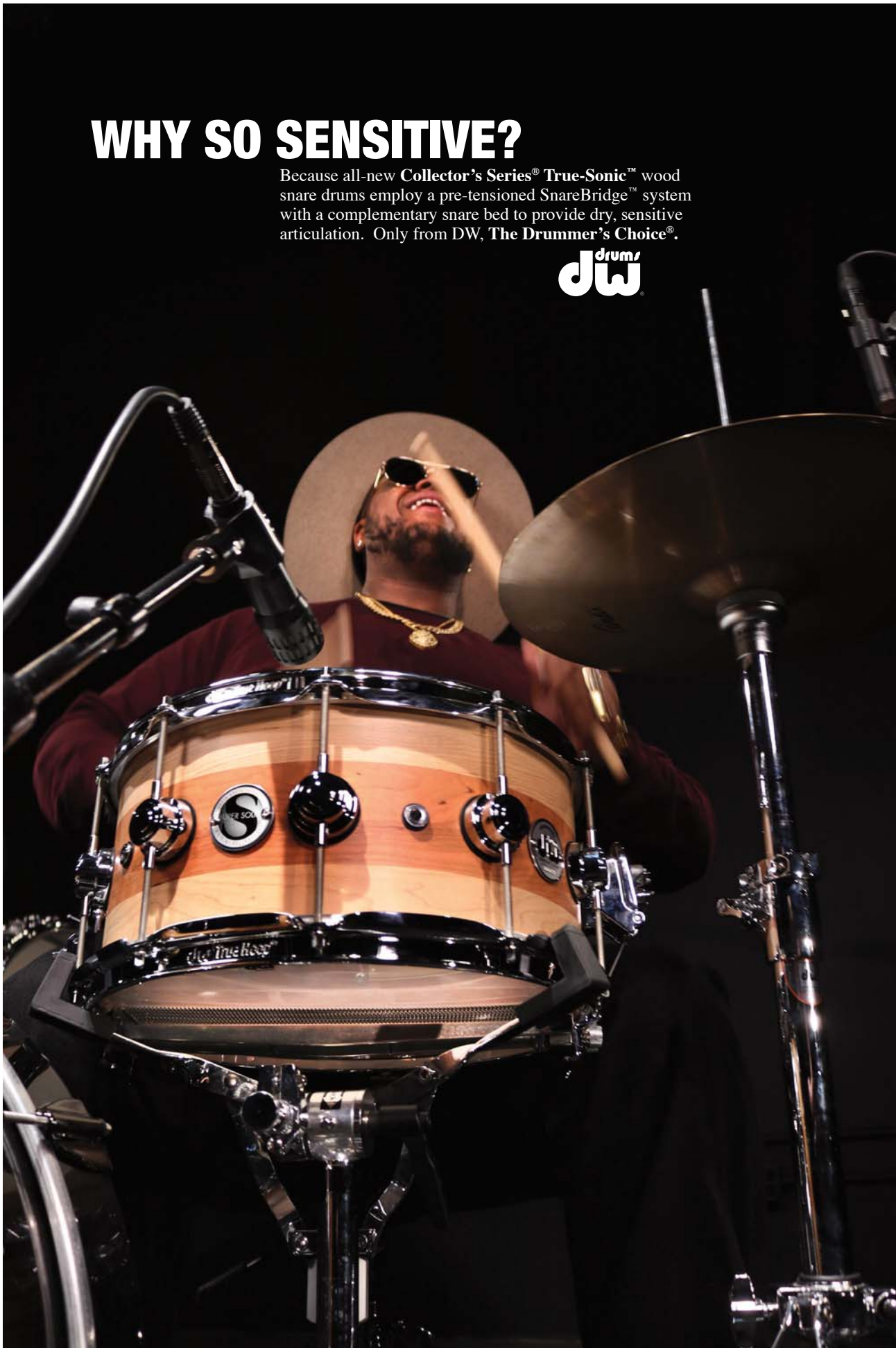

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Jake Morris

James Rexroad

Thirty years after he cofounded the influential and inscrutable indie-rock band Pavement, **Stephen Malkmus** is among the most confident and compelling bandleader/songwriters of his generation. And in this drummer, he has a musician who only accentuates his greatest assets.

by Adam Budofsky

With all of the rock 'n' roll self-help books, articles, and websites available at the click of a mouse these days, it can be strangely comforting to learn that a musician can still land a dream gig armed with not much more than a healthy obsession for the artist and music in general.

Of course, having solid skills on one's chosen instrument is a must as well. And on Stephen Malkmus and the Jicks' latest album, *Sparkle Hard*, Jake Morris more than proves that he's got the goods. Whether it's navigating the controlled chaos of "Rattler," laying down the perfect Russ Kunkel–inspired thump on "Middle America," or providing an appropriately skewed groove to the 7/4 skip of "Future Suite"—and then elevating the song's unique arrangement by playing a countering straight 4/4—Morris seems to be operating with an intrinsic ability to render Malkmus's songs with just the right amount of power and panache.

"Stephen doesn't really have a schooled approach," says Morris, who replaced former Sleater-Kinney and Quasi drummer Janet Weiss in the Jicks following the release of 2011's *Mirror Traffic*. "He's got this sort of galloping style that goes with his guitar. It's really flow based, which is pretty cool. I was a big Pavement fan, so I always felt like I kind of *got* it, though I didn't really know why. Especially live, when jams start to happen or things go a little sideways, I think I can instinctually go there, where a lot of other drummers might not be able to. Especially if you're really schooled or a heavy reader…there's not really a lot of explanation. It's sort of based more on having trust in one another."

Digging into Morris's body of work and chatting with him about his reading and listening habits, a picture emerges of a musician who's uniquely prepared to support the tunes from the Jicks' seven albums—not to mention Pavement's distinguished catalog, which Malkmus has increasingly dipped into on recent tours. Like Ween's Aaron Freeman and Mickey Melchiondo, or Steely Dan's Donald Fagen and Walter Becker before them, Malkmus and his former bandmates were famous for perfecting a simultaneously wry and reverent approach to decades of music history. Morris's immersion in music biographies and penchant for subtly toying with rock 'n' roll convention fit perfectly with that understated aesthetic, and all of it adds to his appeal as a player. We began our discussion by digging into that concept.

MD: Stephen's music has always betrayed a deep knowledge of rock history. I couldn't help but notice your front bass drum head. Is that a takeoff on the original Yes logo?
Jake: Absolutely.
MD: That's awesome, especially since the later Roger Dean logo became the iconic one.
Jake: I love that earlier era. I saw some old footage from that time period and thought, "Oh, my God, that would look *so* cool." My brother is a graphic artist, so I was like, "Make this for me."
MD: Then the cover of *Solid Guild* from your previous band, the Joggers, is a Buffalo Springfield takeoff. Obviously you've got a good feel for music from the '60s and '70s, which could be a clue to your ability to work so well with Stephen Malkmus.
Jake: There's probably something to that—I hadn't really thought about it that way. I'm forty-three, and my parents were really into music from that era. To me the ultimate drum tone is from the Linda Ronstadt cover of "You're No Good." [Multi-instrumentalist Andrew Gold played drums on the track.] Hearing that song is one of my earliest musical memories. That rack tom is what it's supposed to sound like to me now. I'm just chasing that sound. When I was in this band French Kicks, whenever I was driving I played my mix tapes, and one time the bass player said to me, "Every song on this tape has the same drum sound—what's your problem!" [laughs]

John Bentley/Arc/Images

MD: How about when you're not driving the van? What are your reading habits like, for instance?
Jake: I just read music biographies, which is really sad. [laughs] I'm like halfway through three different ones now. But I think the ultimate one is Quincy Jones' book *Q*, because it covers so much. Recently he did these long-form interviews where he told all these tabloid-y stories. That book is like fifteen, twenty years old, and it has just as much of that stuff. He was childhood friends with Ray Charles…you really can't put it down. It's like a history of America.

I recently read Stewart Copeland's autobiography and was like, I do *not* want to hang out with this guy. I mean, he probably was as influential a drummer as anyone. And I responded to the Police so much because of him, and have stolen so much from his playing. And he's still great. He just seems so *manic*.

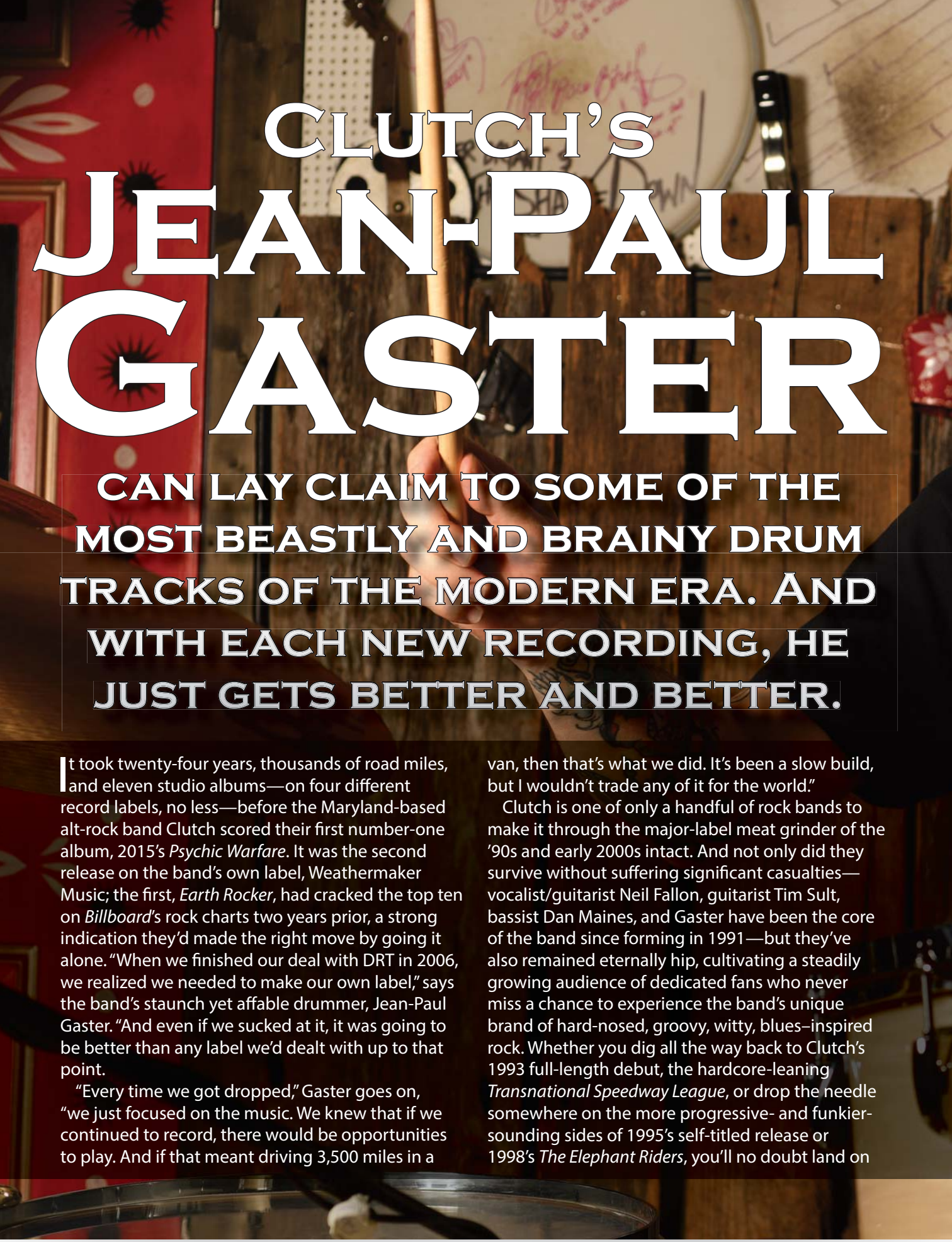
And I'm almost through Bill Kreutzmann's *Deal*. It's really cool, like hanging out with him at a bar. He sort of remembers stuff…until he doesn't. In my mind, he's always *the* Dead drummer. To me the years without Mickey Hart were the best ones.

It's really stupid, though; I'll be in the van, *on tour*, reading about a band *on tour*. Like, how lame is that? Get a life. [laughs]
MD: Let's talk about the new Jicks album, *Sparkle Hard*. It sounds great.
Jake: Thanks, man. We made it here in Portland. There were a lot of drum ideas that Steve had demoed on his electronic drums, which happens a lot. I have to come up with something that he likes and that's in the spirit of what he was going for, and then put my own thing on it.

With a few of the songs, like "Difficulties," his drums are in there and my drums are on top of them. We did a few experiments like that. I did a lot of double tracking, which I'd always wanted to do. The studio where we recorded, Halfling, is a really cool, state-of-the-art, hybrid sort of place. It has a design studio, a skate bowl—we actually set up drums in the skate bowl and did overdubs. I had toms and a snare and a ride, and we got this huge sound.
MD: "Future Suite" is an interesting song, with its odd-time approach.
Jake: Yeah, that's one of the songs that I practiced the most. You have to kind of zone out and do your own thing. That was definitely from Steve's mind, that juxtaposing of the odd time against the straight time.
MD: Even with the experimental elements, there's always a nice live feel to the performances. Did the rhythm section record at the same time?
Jake: We did a lot of the basic tracking live. Bassist Joanna Bolme and I were in a different room, but the studio was pretty nice so we could all see each other. Everything was pretty straightforward old-school as far as getting the basics. There was some editing here and there because there were some elements that were still being fleshed out.
MD: Can you talk about where you're from and how you and Stephen hooked up?
Jake: I grew up in Rochester, New York, and started playing drums around fourth grade. I had a band throughout high school that covered every song under the sun. This was in the late '80s, early '90s. I was singing a lot then and went to Ithaca College School of Music for voice, because I couldn't read music very well and had the dumb idea that I could fake it. Strangely enough, I got in. But it was really intense, kind of like that movie *Whiplash*. I was in way over my head. I tried out for the jazz band, but I hadn't been playing drums at all, and before me in the audition there were some of the greatest drummers I'd ever heard. I freaked out and went in there and played AC/DC beats. I ran out of the audition, threw my sticks in the woods, and was like, *I'm never playing again.* But I got it together and then went to a regular state school and just kept playing in bands.

When I was twenty-three I moved west. In 2008 the Jicks invited the Joggers to open a tour for them. I think that gave them an idea of what I could do. And then Stephen and I played softball together for like seven years. So when Janet Weiss decided to leave the band, he reached out to me and gave me a shot.
MD: How do you see your musical role in the Jicks?
Jake: I feel like my job is to bring a fresh energy, keep people out of their normal playing habits. Joanna and I clicked right off the bat. I've been a huge fan of hers since when she was in Quasi, and I played with her with Rebecca Gates and in other projects. She's such a lyrical and improvisational bass player, and we got locked in right away. She's been Steve's right-hand woman all along. Maybe it was over-confidence, but I've always felt this musical kinship with Stephen's style, so I feel super lucky to be able to get in there and explore with this band. That's not lost on me.

Jake Morris plays C&C drums.



Clutch's Jean-Paul Gaster

can lay claim to some of the most beastly and brainy drum tracks of the modern era. And with each new recording, he just gets better and better.

It took twenty-four years, thousands of road miles, and eleven studio albums—on four different record labels, no less—before the Maryland-based alt-rock band Clutch scored their first number-one album, 2015's *Psychic Warfare*. It was the second release on the band's own label, Weathermaker Music; the first, *Earth Rocker*, had cracked the top ten on *Billboard*'s rock charts two years prior, a strong indication they'd made the right move by going it alone. "When we finished our deal with DRT in 2006, we realized we needed to make our own label," says the band's staunch yet affable drummer, Jean-Paul Gaster. "And even if we sucked at it, it was going to be better than any label we'd dealt with up to that point.

"Every time we got dropped," Gaster goes on, "we just focused on the music. We knew that if we continued to record, there would be opportunities to play. And if that meant driving 3,500 miles in a van, then that's what we did. It's been a slow build, but I wouldn't trade any of it for the world."

Clutch is one of only a handful of rock bands to make it through the major-label meat grinder of the '90s and early 2000s intact. And not only did they survive without suffering significant casualties—vocalist/guitarist Neil Fallon, guitarist Tim Sult, bassist Dan Maines, and Gaster have been the core of the band since forming in 1991—but they've also remained eternally hip, cultivating a steadily growing audience of dedicated fans who never miss a chance to experience the band's unique brand of hard-nosed, groovy, witty, blues–inspired rock. Whether you dig all the way back to Clutch's 1993 full-length debut, the hardcore-leaning *Transnational Speedway League*, or drop the needle somewhere on the more progressive- and funkier-sounding sides of 1995's self-titled release or 1998's *The Elephant Riders*, you'll no doubt land on

something with an infectious, fist-pumping riff and body-rocking groove.

The band explored more straightforward, driving beats on 2001's *Pure Rock Fury*, and 2004's *Blast Tyrant* helped introduce Clutch to a wider audience when the single "The Mob Goes Wild" was included in the popular videogame *Rock Band 2* and the deeper cut "The Regulator" appeared in an episode of the post-apocalyptic television series *The Walking Dead*.

Adding organist Mick Schauer to the group for 2005's *Robot Hive/Exodus*, JP and company showcased their blues influences by covering Mississippi Fred McDowell's "Gravel Road" and Howlin' Wolf's "Who's Been Talking?" Clutch continued to explore the slinkier, groovier side of things on 2007's *From Beale Street to Oblivion* before returning to a more stripped-down aesthetic on their ninth album, *Strange Cousins from the West*.

While most bands tend to chill out later in their careers, Clutch cranked the intensity level to a new high for their tenth album, *Earth Rocker*, which was released in 2013 after the band toured in support of hard-rock legends Motörhead and Thin Lizzy. The chart-topping *Psychic Warfare* followed suit with an edgy, ferocious sound that gives the entire record a sense of urgency, from the up-tempo rocker "X-Ray Visions" to the sludgy closer "Son of Virginia."

When it came time to make their twelfth album, *Book of Bad Decisions*, Clutch packed up the band truck and headed down to Nashville to spend a few weeks at Sputnik Sound with award-winning Nashville-based producer Vance Powell, whose raw, organic style of recording—as heard on hit albums by Jack White, Chris Stapleton, and others—appealed to Gaster and his bandmates, who were looking to make a more sonically aggressive and live-feeling album this time around.

Story by Michael Dawson **Photos by Rick Malkin**

MD: What did you hear in Vance Powell's productions that made you want to work with him?
JP: The thing that stood out to me most when I listened to recordings that Vance had made was that each instrument had a very definitive character. It wasn't the normal sounds. Things sounded squashed or smashed or distorted or colorful in some way. That's what we were ready for at this point. We were looking to make a very different-sounding record than we'd made in the past. I think both *Psychic Warfare* and *Earth Rocker* were similar in that the tonality was consistent from beginning to end. This time around we wanted to try something different.
MD: But not straying too far—you guys have maintained a general aesthetic.
JP: That comes from having the same four guys play the same four instruments. You can work with different producers and in different studios, but if the band is true to [their] sound, it's going to end up sounding like the band. Working with different people helps inspire the energy of the record, maybe even more than the eventual outcome of what it sounds like.
MD: How was Vance's production style different from what you've experienced in the past?
JP: Speaking just about the drum sounds, he had a very specific idea for how the bass drum was going to sound. That really colored the entire tonality of the drumkit.
MD: Did you talk about that sound ahead of time?
JP: Yeah. He mikes drums differently each time, so we talked about

"Fills are usually the last things I think about. No matter how much I practice ahead of time, as soon as I get in the studio and start playing, whatever plan I had goes out the window."

6 Big Beats from *Book of Bad Decisions*

JP Gaster's powerhouse pocket and slinky feel are on full display throughout *Book of Bad Decisions*. Here are half a dozen highlights.

"Gimme the Keys"

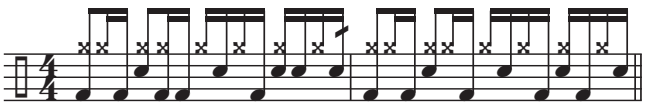
The album's opening track begins with a heavily filtered half-time shuffle that leads into a driving triplet-based groove featuring some snaky left-hand ghost notes and drags. (0:54)

"Book of Bad Decisions"

This super-funky tune leaves plenty of space to feature the trashy, pumping drum sound JP and producer Vance Powell crafted for the record. Dig on how Gaster glues the groove together with a couple choice grace notes on the snare. (0:00)

"In Walks Barbarella"

Clutch cops a '70s funk vibe on this tune, and Gaster crafts a super-slick two-bar groove that keeps the beat buoyant with subtle variations in the kick and snare parts. (1:15)

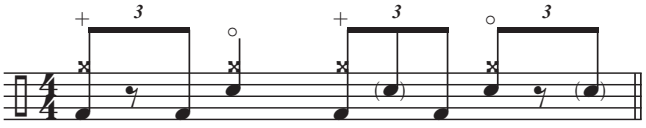


"Emily Dickinson"

JP is a master at creating big, powerful grooves that are sparse with notes but abundantly detailed and nuanced. This song's primary groove features tight offbeat drags that live somewhere between straight and shuffle feels. (0:06)

"A Good Fire"

Here's a driving rock shuffle that features a slinky snare that implies quarter-note triplets and choice hi-hat openings on the backbeats to keep the groove grounded. (0:10)



"Hot Bottom Feeder"

Gaster showcases his early rock and New Orleans influences with this crafty Bo Diddley–meets–Mardi Gras Indian beat. (0:16)

wanting to have not such a wide, panoramic sound but a more focused image of the kit. We listened to some music together, but most importantly he came out on the road with us.

MD: It really sounds like you guys were playing live on *Book of Bad Decisions*.

JP: That's what we were really trying to capture, and I think Vance's time on the road helped him hear what we were like live. I think that experience gave him a perspective for how he wanted the record to ultimately sound.

So the bass drum sound really set the tone for what we ended up getting. We used a 26" drum. The heads were tuned super low, to the point where when I hit another drum, the heads would really resonate. There was no hole in the front head. We just had two microphones on the front head and nothing inside the drum. That gave it an older flavor.

MD: I imagine that sound took up a lot of space in the mix.

JP: Thankfully Vance knows how to make that stuff work. It's pretty inspiring watching him dial in tones. He's very hands-on, and he's not afraid to turn things into the red to get a specific sound. He's mixing as he's recording. And we played together in the room with the intention of keeping all the tracks.

MD: And that's different from how you've approached recording in the past?

JP: We'd gotten closer to that on *Psychic Warfare*, but even some of the basic tracks weren't used. This time around, we made it a point that when we recorded the drums, we wanted to have keeper takes for guitar and bass, too. We even started doubling guitars as soon as we had a basic band track down. That gave us an idea for what the record was going to sound like right away, rather than [us having to come] back to a song a few days later. It was [a] very spontaneous feeling, which wasn't something we'd had while making the last couple records.

MD: Did that approach force you to make compromises with the takes that you ended up using because they were overall better for the band?

JP: Every take was made with the intention that it would be the final take. But when I would listen back, if I heard stuff that wasn't exactly what I wanted it to be but the overall groove was there, we just let it be. For me, it's not about showing off all the cool fills I worked out ahead of time. I want the tune to have energy of its own. And I'm thinking about how to support that vocal to make it the best that it can be.

MD: Did you workshop these songs live beforehand?

JP: Definitely. We started the writing process about a year before we entered the studio, at our warehouse, which we call Doom Saloon. Every night after rehearsal, I would mix down whatever ideas we had that day and post them to Dropbox. For the first six months, it was about building a catalog of songs in varying degrees of being complete. Some sounded like tunes right away, and others were riffs or jams that could be shaped into songs. But ultimately new songs come together when we play them live, which is something we've done since the beginning of the band.

MD: What happens to the songs when you take them out live?

JP: They go from being a conceptual idea to something that's

finished or something that needs to be fixed. When we play a new song live, I'm thinking about how everybody's gelling together, and I'm listening to how the vocal is being performed. We've always been a live band, so the live show is where the songs come to life.

MD: Do the tempos change once you take them out live?

JP: Tempos are a huge part of it. We record the new stuff when we play it live, and oftentimes I'll play to a click to get a feel for whether or not the tempo is where it needs to be. That way it's a concrete discussion about whether or not it felt better when it was faster the night before. By the time we get to the studio, we have an idea of how each song is supposed to be played and where I might need to pull some things back to make space for different riffs.

MD: Did you track to a click?

JP: Yes.

MD: So when you say "pull back," you're talking about subtle changes.

JP: Right.

MD: How did you develop this ability to pull back or push without rushing or dragging?

JP: That's something that I've developed from years of playing with a click when we're writing. The first thing I do when these guys bring in a new riff is find the tempo. I'm sure we've all been in a situation where you start jamming a new idea and it feels great, but then when you come back to it later it doesn't have that same energy. I've found that we can avoid that by keeping to that original tempo. Then later we can make a decision to try it faster or slower.

MD: What are you focusing on when you're pushing or pulling within one tempo?

JP: I'm thinking about the whole band and what I can do to get them to hold back a little bit. But I'm not thinking about anything specifically with the drums at that point.

MD: Do you cue those shifts with fills?

JP: I do that from time to time, but fills are usually the last things I think about, especially when recording. No matter how much I practice a fill ahead of time, as soon as I get in the studio and start playing, whatever plan I had goes out the window. [laughs]

MD: How does Clutch write? Does someone come in with three quarters of a song or just a riff? And how do the ideas get shaped into a complete song?

JP: This time around, every time we got together, everybody would bring in an idea. Being the singer, Neil would usually have ideas that were pretty complete-sounding. On the other hand, I picked up mandolin a few years ago, so I wrote ideas on that. One of those is on the song "[A] Good Fire," which was really just me trying to play a shuffle in the style of Double Trouble. So every time we got together, there would be four new ideas. After a few months of doing that, we had a huge collection of riffs, full songs, and potential ideas. But there's no one way that a song gets written in Clutch.

MD: So you jam on a riff for a while, and then other ideas pop up?

JP: Yeah. We'll jam on the riff for a bit and then record that. Then we'll think about other ideas for different sections that we could add, and we'll record those. Because we're cutting to a click the entire time, sometimes we'll record the different parts separately, and I'll edit them together later. That way we don't spend too much time getting bogged down by working out little details that might not be too consequential to the song. Those things can be worked out later. But you have to have the song together first.

MD: Do ideas get trashed?

JP: Sure. Of all the things that were brought to the table, probably eighty percent of them ended up not being used. We pulled from fifty or sixty ideas to end up with the fifteen songs on the album.

JP's *Book of Bad Decisions* Setup

Drums: Gretsch Brooklyn series in Cream Oyster finish
A. 8x14 Ludwig & Ludwig snare
B. 9x13 tom
C. 16x16 floor tom
D. 14x26 bass drum

Cymbals: Meinl Byzance series
1. 15" Vintage Pure hi-hats
2. 20" Extra Dry Thin crash
3. 24" Medium ride
4. 20" Medium crash
5. 19" Medium Thin crash

Heads: Evans G2 Coated snare batter, G2 Clear tom batters, G2 Clear bass drum batter

Sticks: Vater West Side

Hardware: DW 9000 series hi-hat, snare stands, and bass drum pedal, 6000 series cymbal stands

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Jean-Paul Gaster

MD: When it comes to drum parts, do you usually go with your first instincts, or do you go through a slew of permutations?
JP: In the writing stage, I try not to overthink what I'm doing. Usually I'll have something that comes out right away, and most of the time that's what ends up on the record. But I'll spend time on my own tweaking stuff. I might move bass drum notes in a verse or rehearse some crazy fill that I know won't end up on the track anyway. [laughs]
MD: Getting back to the drum sounds on *Book of Bad Decisions*, what else did you do to get that gritty, aggressive sound?
JP: We had a stereo ribbon mic directly over the top of the kit, and most of the drum sound came from that. Then we just filled in mics around it.
MD: Were you hearing the distorted or compressed sounds as you were tracking?
JP: Absolutely, and that made me play a certain way. On the title track, which is basically a twelve-bar blues with a simple groove, I got really excited when I heard the bass drum breathing. And I had the snare tuned super low. I used a 1939 Ludwig & Ludwig 8x14 solid-shell drum. I could hear all the resonance in the headphones, which made it exciting to play. Vance also had an old Ampex microphone facing the kit over the hi-hats that he would send through some old guitar stomp boxes. That was exciting because it created these layers of extra rhythms to play to.
MD: How many snares did you use on the record?
JP: We used a different snare for each tune. I brought probably ten, and we used a couple of Vance's. He has an old Leedy that ended up on "Hot Bottom Feeder," and there's a stave drum on "A Good Fire." I brought some Gretsch and Slingerland drums. I have a chrome-over-brass that I'm especially a fan of.
MD: How did you decide which drum to use?
JP: We just tried them in the track. Vance was very opinionated about what he

RECORDINGS

Clutch Transnational Speedway League, Clutch, The Elephant Riders, Jam Room, Pure Rock Fury, Blast Tyrant, Robot Hive/Exodus, From Beale Street to Oblivion, Strange Cousins from the West, Earth Rocker, Psychic Warfare, Book of Bad Decisions /// **The Bakerton Group** The Bakerton Group, El Rojo /// **Kelly Carmichael** Queen Fareena /// **Five Horse Johnson** The Taking of Black Heart

thought would work in the end, and he would push me to tune higher or lower than I would normally do. He has an idea of what he wants the song to sound like before we get to the mix stage, so he was making decisions as we went. We were committing to the sounds, rather than waiting for mixing to decide. That made the recording process exciting and maybe even a little scary at times. With the technology that we have available these days, we could have put things off until almost the mastering stage. We wanted to avoid that.

MD: Did you swap out toms?

JP: We used the same toms, but I used clear heads this time, which was something I hadn't done in many years. So overall the sound was probably brighter than I've had on previous albums, but that ribbon overhead rounded off the harsh edges a bit.

MD: What was your cymbal setup?

JP: I used Meinl Byzance series. I used Jazz hi-hats for a good portion of the album, and I used 14" and 15" Vintage Pures. The main ride was a 24" Medium, but I have a 23" Heavy that I used on occasion. The crashes were 19", 20", or 21", and I usually had another ride there too, like a 22" Sand ride or 21" Medium.

MD: Do you use the second ride for riding or crashing?

JP: I ride and crash on all of my cymbals. I only use three, but I ride on all of them, and I hit the bells on all of them. It's important for me to be able to get different kinds of colors out of the cymbals, which I think makes my playing more detailed.

MD: Is that a jazz influence?

JP: I suppose so. One of my favorite drummers is Johnny Vidacovich, and I've drawn a lot of inspiration from him. One of my favorite things about him is his ability to get all these different colors out the drums and cymbals. I try to apply that to Clutch. I make an effort to draw the sounds out of the drumset to complement what's happening in the music. That makes the experience of playing drums a little more interactive, rather than it being a color-by-numbers thing.

MD: You seem to be able to produce a big, confident sound without actually hitting the drums super hard. Did you practice developing your touch?

JP: That's something I've definitely practiced and continue to practice. Growing up in the Washington, D.C., area, I heard a lot of go-go records, like Chuck Brown, Experience Unlimited, and Rare Essence. The sound of those beats made an instant impression on me, even before I was playing drums. I liked the persistency of it, and there was

no question as to where the time was. Even when I started playing in hardcore bands, I always thought about how a drummer like [EU's] Juju House would play it. How do I make it swing like a go-go thing?

So go-go very much informed how I play drums today. I don't want there to be any question as to where the time is. When you hit the bass drum, you make sure everybody knows where it is. And that backbeat…you have to make it crystal clear. If you can provide that, you make the other musicians feel very comfortable because there's no question as to where the time is.

MD: I was thinking your more nuanced touch might have been coming from a jazz or John Bonham influence.

JP: You're right, too. At the same time I was hearing go-go records, I started listening to Black Sabbath. I remember listening to Bill Ward one night and realizing that he was doing things that I had seen Gene Krupa do on concert shows that were airing on public television. As a fourteen-year-old kid, that blew my mind, and I began to understand how you could play heavy music without playing like a meathead. You could have some finesse in the sound. Then from listening to Bill Ward, I started digging into other guys who were straddling the jazz-rock thing, like Ginger Baker with Cream and Mitch Mitchell with Hendrix. I wanted to bring that concept into my playing.

MD: Did you go through a period of obsessive practice?

JP: Early on I didn't really know how to practice. The idea of working on specific ideas was foreign to me. I just played along to records and watched as many drummers as I could. But when I realized that I wanted to play drums for a living, I started studying with a well-known teacher in the D.C. area named Walter Saab. He taught me how to practice. We worked on independence, and he taught me how to use the book *Syncopation*. I worked on those things for years, and I took that book with me on the road with Clutch.

MD: Were you full-time with Clutch at that point?

JP: We were full-time pretty much right away, but right around that time we were doing well enough to rent an old farmhouse in West Virginia. We jammed all the time, and I would practice five to eight hours a day when we weren't on tour. It was a great experience. We didn't have any money, but we were driven, and we learned how to play.

MD: That must have set the mold for the band.

JP: Very much so. I knew that this band had the potential to make an impact on people, and we're very fortunate to have very dedicated fans. And it was no different back in the early days. It was much smaller, but the folks who came to shows appreciated us just as much. And that meant a lot to us because we were bouncing around from label to label at that time.

MD: What are you working on these days? Are you trying to learn new techniques,

FAVORITES

Black Sabbath Black Sabbath /// **Bad Brains** Rock for Light /// **John Coltrane** A Love Supreme /// **Junk Yard Band** Live at Safari Club /// **Miles Davis** Live-Evil /// **Jimi Hendrix** Band of Gypsys /// **Funkadelic** Funkadelic /// **Ginger Baker** Middle Passage /// **James Brown** 20 All-Time Greatest Hits! /// **The Meters** Funkify Your Life

or are you focused on refining what you already know?

JP: It's a little bit of both. I try to practice things in small pieces. Most recently I watched some videos of go-go drummer Paul Buggy Edwards and picked up on a little hi-hat sticking thing he was doing. So I put on a metronome, played some go-go beats, and started putting in these little six-stroke rolls on the "&" of 3. After chewing on something like that for a while, it inevitably grows into something else that might work within a different context.

I think many drummers would benefit from listening and trying things that are outside their genre. Someone like Elvin Jones inspires me in ways that I can apply to what I do with Clutch, and that's beyond any specific licks. It's more about the energy he brought to the bandstand and the way he inspired the musicians around him.

MD: There's a similar emotional depth and power in your playing.

JP. Thank you. Maybe some of that has to do with this idea of thinking that time is elastic. You can affect the musicians around you just by the way you play a beat. There are all these rhythmical gears happening at the same time, whether that's triplets over

straight 16ths or the other way around. You don't have to play them, but if you can hear these gears over what you're doing, it gives your playing a bit more fluidity and elasticity, which can translate into a more emotional feel.

MD: You guys play a lot of shuffles. How can someone get that feel dialed in?

JP: You just have to play the damn shuffle. [laughs] Just sit down and play a double shuffle, with the bass drum, snare, and ride in unison, and try to make it breathe while getting the hi-hat closing really crisp on 2 and 4. I also often practice playing the shuffle as quietly as I can while keeping the pulse happening. That's very difficult to do.

You also have to understand that the shuffle is elastic. Depending on the amount that you smash those shuffle notes together, you can get different textures and colors. You can open them up to get that New Orleans thing that's halfway between straight and swung. Or you can play it totally straight.

You can experiment with various degrees of swing. Play a shuffle to a metronome at a moderate-slow tempo. Make the shuffle very straight at first, and then start to shuffle it even more, until the notes are almost stuck together like a flam. Then straighten it back out, but keep the time happening.

MD: Did you do anything to develop your inner pulse, or was that something that developed over time?

JP: I almost always practice with a metronome, especially if I'm focusing on something very specific and I don't want to be distracted. For example, if I'm playing a shuffle and I'm feeling really good about the way the left hand is sounding, then I'll start to think about the ride cymbal. What if I put a little more of an accent on beat 1? Or what if I put a little accent on the "&" of 1? What does that sound like?

MD: So you're really into exploring the nuances.

JP: Yeah, because that's where the feel happens. I'm not interested in developing fills that are three bars long. There are plenty of other drummers who do that way better than I do. I would much rather spend my time shedding to a Muddy Waters record and seeing how much I can squeeze out of a shuffle. I think it's important to get that shuffle feel together because it informs the rest of your drumming, even the way you play a rock beat. If you can wrap your head around the shuffle, it'll make your playing more elastic.

MD: That goes back to what you mentioned about hearing all these different gears going so that you're not locked into playing things just one way.

JP: Absolutely. But when it comes time to play music, I make it a point to stop thinking about all of that stuff. Hopefully you've practiced these ideas to the point where it all happens subconsciously. The best gigs I've played were the ones where I wasn't thinking at all—the music just happened. Practice with your brain, but play from the neck down.

MD: What have you not accomplished that you'd like to tackle?

JP: There's always room to play more jazz. Those are the drummers that continue to inspire me: Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette…. What blows me away is the vocabulary that these guys were able to develop over a very short amount of time.

MD: And we're still trying to figure it out.

JP: Right. Here we are a hundred years later, and we're still trying to figure out how they arrived at those ideas. Those are the concepts I focus on when I'm by myself. How to play a ride cymbal beat…you can think about that all day long.

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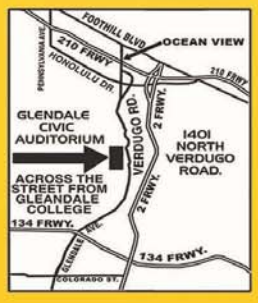

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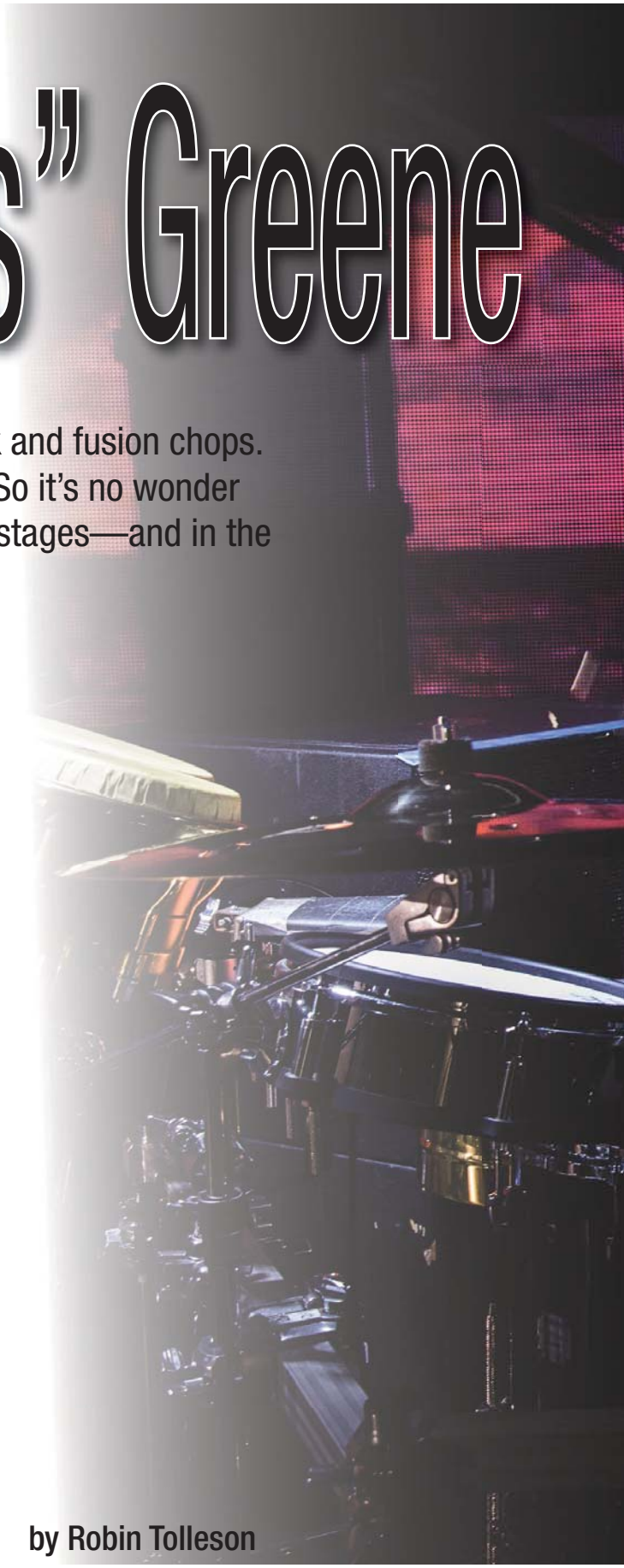
Jay-Z's Eric "Boots" Greene



He's developed some of the nastiest funk and fusion chops. And he thinks and plays like a producer. So it's no wonder that he flourishes on the world's biggest stages—and in the modern studio environment.

by Robin Tolleson

Eric "Boots" Greene is a prime example of the contemporary drummer, an amalgam of classic musical influences and contemporary career approaches, which demand skill and creativity whether it's a drumstick or a computer mouse that he's got in his hand.

Boots was born in Georgetown, South Carolina, and at two years old moved with his family to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His first national tour was with Philly songstress Jill Scott, and he's since played behind Patti LaBelle, Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, Snoop Dogg, Wiz Khalifa, Common, Jay-Z, and Cardi B. He recently teamed with Darrell Robinson in N.E.R.D's two-drummer attack, and currently he's part of the ensemble for Beyoncé and Jay-Z's "OTR II" tour.

An engaging, outgoing personality, Greene hosts enlightening YouTube videos, inviting viewers behind the scenes on tour, interviewing other drummers in a podcast format, and offering lessons learned from the triumphs and tribulations he's personally gone through coming up in the music industry. He's written a book, *The InstruMENTAL-ist*, which he calls, simply, "my real life story." And earlier this year he released a solo album called *Trapped*. "I [make] mix tapes and singles and albums…I really just want to put music out," he says. "I want people to hear what I'm doing, what I go through. So I'm studying and keeping that flowing while I'm doing this music over here—and paying bills on tour over here."

MD: You did some of your first drumming in church.
Boots: It's a great outlet. I got into drums around the age of two at church with my dad. He played in church in Philadelphia back in the day. I just sat behind him and tried to study him. I would go to other churches with him and hear what the drummers there did, retain that, and go home and do what I heard.

[There are] so many different genres in church, but church gives you the freedom, if you ask me. Gospel music now has a lot of breaks and sections where drummers have the opportunity to set things up, as opposed to just playing drums and doing a chop. You have an opportunity to bring the chorus in or the verse back in, or do the breakdown, or take it to the vamp. So I think that's why we have the freedom of adding [things like] fusion chops. Like, this is what I feel, but as long as I make it to that next section [laughs], we're good.

MD: Did you receive any other training like lessons?
Boots: Just listening. Drums is natural to me—it's what I love to do. I was playing piano in the high school jazz band. There was already a drummer there, and I knew that I could play the drums and do the gig, so I thought, this is cool, I can learn piano, I can learn a different language, a different approach to the music. And when I started playing drums, I didn't even need to read in a sense, because I understood the theory. Hearing how the other jazz drummers approached it, then when I finally played, I had it in me. I just started learning on my own, listening to other drummers and understanding what they were saying on the drums. I would hear people talking through the drums. I'd go home and try to mimic it, and then I'd implement it into my own style, and that's how things started. I wasn't just playing gospel, or just playing jazz. It was like, I'm going to play everything I hear.
MD: Developing your own style.
Boots: Yeah, I never wanted to stay in a box. People will tell you that I'm very against the grain. I'm like the Kanye of drums, if that makes sense. I don't believe in the formula. I don't believe in the grain. If I can learn this genre of music, I can learn that genre of music. Or, I *should* learn that genre of music, because I label myself a drummer. You're not a drummer if you can't play polka music, or country. Because if they ask you to play for a country artist but you can only play gospel, then you're just a gospel drummer.
MD: Who are some of the drummers who've influenced you?
Boots: Of course Dave Weckl, Vinnie Colaiuta, Dennis Chambers…. And as far as my home-bred, Lil' John Roberts, Brian Frasier-Moore, Erik Tribbett, and definitely Gerald Heyward. Gerald used to invite me to his church every other weekend, and it was always huge DW kits and mad musicians there. Drummers and bass players, and keyboardists and organists and guitar players. It was like a shed every weekend at the church, like a top-of-the-line shed. People like Gerald took me under their wing and showed me the ropes.
MD: You must have put the hours in practicing early on.
Boots: Definitely. My dad always had some type of drumset or something for me. I would go downstairs and just practice and practice. And not even specific things. I just played. Let me do this,

and let me try it the other way, or let me reverse this. Just come up with something new. Learning stuff differently from what others were learning. No one ever forced me. It was just a hunger. I really wanted to learn more about drums and about all these different things I'd heard on the radio. All these different types of beats, and how they got those sounds. Those were the types of things that I was into, and it made me practice.

MD: Learning how to play from the heart as well as off the page.

Boots: It's the truth, man. Both ways are great, but when you learn from your heart, it's something you want to do. Your passion's different for it.

MD: When did you start thinking about the production side of music?

Boots: I made my first album around twelve or thirteen. It was a gospel artist named Tarra Scotton. I was just making songs and beats at the time. So from that point, I took production seriously, while playing drums. I decided to be a drummer first and a producer on the back end, because the drums were my first love, and that's what was getting me gigs.

The production started getting into the drumming side, because now I'm looking at the grid. The verse is eight bars, the chorus is twelve, and the breakdown is four…. At a certain point I was starting to see the grid while I was playing the drums. Someone will send me music, and when I'm learning it I don't really count bars, like we're at bar 8, bar 16, bar 24. I either go off lyrics, or I go off the grid, which I can visually see. That helps me when I'm playing to where, *Alright, Boots, this is the pocket, this is the verse, this is where you relax. Okay, we're going into the chorus, bring us out*…. I'm literally talking to myself, looking at the grid. So I know where I can add little things where it doesn't affect the vocals. Because if I was producing it, I wouldn't crowd the vocals. That's the thing that people don't get. They think you're just hitting drums. No. You can either make or break this song, because if you do too much, we're going to get lost, whereas if you just relax and let the song breathe and you find your area, then it feels better.

MD: It takes a lot of precision to play hip-hop. It sounds simple, but those dropouts and small things have to be spot on.

Boots: Those small things are actually the big things. You're playing a pocket for so long, and that one drop comes up, and you're like, *Oh, dang it, I forgot about that.* You know, if you're playing a song where it's fifty breaks, you're going to remember the fifty breaks, because your mind is going that way. But when you're just relaxing and playing a groove, and that one drop comes, you're like, *How did I miss that?* Because you were grooving. That's also a complicated

Drums: Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute
A. 5x12 steel snare
B. 8x14 brass snare
C. 6x13 maple snare
D. 7x10 tom
E. 8x12 floor tom
F. 16x16 tom
G. 13" brass timbale
H. 20x22 bass drum

Sticks: Promark ActiveGrip Classic 5A

Cymbals: Zildjian and Sabian
1. 14" Zildjian K Special Dry hi-hats
2. 10" Sabian Chopper
3. 18" Zildjian EFX crash
4. 20" Zildjian EFX crash

Heads: Evans, including a Hybrid batter on the 8x14 snare, a Heavyweight batter on the 6x13 snare, an HD Dry batter on the 5x12 snare, Onyx tom batters, and an EMAD bass drum batter

Percussion: bongos, tambourine, Pearl low-pitched clave block, high and low cowbell

Hardware: Yamaha stands and pedals, three-sided Pearl ICON rack, Porter & Davies throne with amp

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX sampling pad, RT-30 triggers, RT-30K trigger, PD-128 pad

thing for some people: to play a pocket, or to mimic an actual drum pattern. That's why artists get upset. They're like, "Yo, that's not what it sounds like on my song." Do what that's doing, and then implement your feel into it when it's time.

MD: Making the artist happy.

Boots: Seriously. That's your job, man—make 'em happy. You're also showing your professionalism. It's like, you either have to play with triggers or with pads. Now you have to gravitate and really put your mind to something else, to where it's not just drums. For instance, I did the Jay-Z gig, the *4:44* tour, and there were a few songs where I had to literally just play the actual sounds, and play it like the record. It's not about how I think it should feel. "Listen to the record; we're going to give you the sounds—play the sounds, and play just like the record, with this feel"—whether it's swing, syncopated, or whatever.

You have to figure out as a drummer how to mimic this exact feel so the artist is happy. And people think it's easy, like they could get out there and impress the artist with chops or by playing hard and playing a pocket. But do you know what the pocket is? It's not just playing straight; it's playing the pattern, the feel, the drive, whatever that consists of, for the artist to be happy.

People don't listen to the records deeply enough to hear the difference between an 808 and [an acoustic] kick drum, or a hi-hat and open 808 hi-hat sound. Because now they're getting very intricate on these songs. So if you can't differentiate an 808 from a kick drum, you could possibly make this song sound cluttered because you're overdoing it.

That's the thing I try to teach people, because a lot of the young guys coming up now are getting it confused, to where they think YouTube and a lot of the IG and Facebook clips where people are chopping away, they think that's the way to go. No. Questlove is where he's at because he plays the music, simple as that. He plays the pocket. And the guy is everywhere. They know his afro, and they know when he sits down he's going to play the pocket, and you're going to feel great. A lot of people get stuck on the speed, forgetting that it's not about them, it's about the music.

MD: You've also talked about making the crowd happy.

Boots: You gotta feed the crowd. You have to be damn near more ecstatic to be there than they are. You have to show them a good time. Their energy feeds off of you, so if you're playing and you look bored or upset, it's going to show and it's going to affect your playing. So why not get over it, and understand these people want to see the artist, but they know the artist has a band, so it's time to show up and show out.

MD: In your "On the Road With" videos, when things don't work perfectly on tour, you'll often say, "It's time to give thanks, be grateful. Things could be worse."

Boots: You keep yourself positive, because it's very easy to snap, to get mad and just do something stupid. So I just look at things like, whether it's good or bad, everything's a test. When you receive something negative, how do you receive it? Do you still give thanks for that negative because it taught you a lesson? You've got to think positively on both sides. That's just me, man—I'm grateful for every single thing, even stuff I hate.

MD: From the technical side of it, do you remember any issues that have come up on tour, and how you dealt with them?

Boots: Oh, yeah. Electronic situations where triggers and stuff go wrong, or things cut off, or stuff isn't saved the way you saved it. Sometimes the techs double-check things, and things are great and correct, only for you to get up onstage and [they're] not.

A lot of technical things happen out here, because people are moving fast, and that's one thing I had to realize. Everyone's human. You might miss a chord or miss this or that, because it's kind of hectic out here. But I think that's where the professionalism comes in. And like I said, remain positive, because if you're thinking on the negative you're going to miss something.

I think that's what happens a lot with crew members on the technical side of things. I'm not a quick-to-get-mad guy; I just try to fix it. Either I'll turn it off or mess with it or whatever, but other than that, I'm cool. As far as a drumheads and stuff, I don't bust heads, I don't break sticks. I'm not like a crazy drum player dude—I don't hit all hard or do anything crazy—so it was never any issue on the drum side. But yeah, technically something always happens. You can't always depend on computers—it's like, you can't live with 'em, you can live without 'em.

MD: You've played with so many different kinds of people. Do you think differently for each project? For instance, N.E.R.D is a two-drummer group.

Boots: That was me and Darrell Robinson. Yeah, that's a different mindset. Because now you've got to think, *Who's going to play what, and when, and why?* Every little single thing—sounds from the record, to the actual acoustic drums, to who's going to

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lead off the next song or who's going to fill on the next song. You can easily clutter it up if there's no communication.

Bottom line, [these are] someone's songs, and [these are] two loud drummers. Every gig is different for me, and I love it. It's a challenge, but that's how it should be. It makes me a better producer, a better drummer, a better musician, and a better person overall, because it's also teaching [me] to open up and to gravitate towards different things.

MD: I noticed that you sometimes have a gong bass drum on the left of your snare.

Boots: That's one thing about me, man: I never have the same setup. I feel like every gig is different. For Common I have three or four snares, bongos, a floor tom, a kick, and two crashes and hats. I have the snares because it's hip-hop, because the snares change more than anything. [There are] no tom-toms or fills or crashing cymbals in hip-hop. But to keep the live aspect I keep crashes there to hit on the 1 every once in a while.

Playing this Jay gig, it's the same as hip-hop, but [there are] more breaks in it, more hits and stuff, so I added toms and bongos. And I'm playing with Beyoncé's band a little bit—percussion—so I have bongos, some toys, cowbells, timbales, which is nowhere near a setup that I've had before. For Cardi B I had a regular setup—five-piece kit, two snares, two cymbals, pad on the side—because all her stuff is trap music. I could have really just played kick, snare, and hat, and maybe a crash. It's claps and high-pitched 808 snares, so that's when the producer [in me] comes in—like, we need a couple piccolos; tune these bad boys high, and make them match the gig and the sounds.

Trap is a genre that's basically, like, the drums with all these thousand hi-hats everywhere. Playing these songs, you can't really mimic everything, because it's all computerized—everything is syncopated. So it's like, let me just play these claps or just mimic what I can, but you ain't going to have time to be doing chops and all that, because the drum track is already so intricate.

MD: I've seen you with snares on the right side, too.

Boots: Yeah, I've had snares everywhere. I've had toms everywhere, the gong drum on both sides. I'm all for some changes. I've had tin cans, tin buckets, all kinds of stuff. I like being different. I'm a producer. I hear things other than just kick, snare, hi-hat, tom, crash. I hear everything.

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Jan Delay's Jost Nickel

Just when you think there's nothing new under the drumming sun, someone like this veteran German player comes along and sheds new light on the craft. The fact that he plays with such blistering technique and sophisticated musicality only makes him that much *more* compelling.

By Ken Micallef

Whether supporting superstar German pop artist Jan Delay, conducting a clinic, or recording one of the dozens of albums he's cut since the early '90s, Jost Nickel plays with delicacy, subtlety, and skill. He also exhibits great invention, incorporating techniques like dead-sticking and grabbing/muting of cymbals, seamless 16th-note snare and bass drum rolls, complex full-set figures, and a panoply of flam-infused ideas.

Nickel has worked and recorded with a diverse array of European artists including Dacia & the WMD, Ostkreutz, Nils Gessinger Band, Zascha Moktan, Trinity Xperiment, Johannes Oerding, and Matalex, with whom he's recorded five albums. As a performer he's still relatively under the radar in the U.S.—though Nickel's drumming on MSM Schmidt's *Life*, which also features long-established fusion icons Dave Weckl and Virgil Donati, may change that. And the hardcore drumming community in the States has been hip to the forty-eight year old as a performer/educator for a while now. The drummer's most recent release is *Jost Nickel's Fill Book: A Systematic & Fun Approach to Fills*. The release, published by Alfred Music, brings the subject of drum fills into the 21st century, incorporating the bass drum into exercises that will challenge your chops and stretch your imagination.

Like with his previous *Groove Book*, Nickel doesn't take it easy on prospective students in *Fill Book*. From page 1, Nickel asks students to incorporate the bass drum within 16th-note patterns. He adds to that chapters on 8th- and 16th-note triplets (within three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine-note groupings), counting and "clicking," leading figures with the hi-hat, and such topics as path orchestration, diddle kicks, clockwise and counterclockwise playing, hand and foot rolls, stick shots, flam fills, and cymbal chokes. An appendix is devoted to snare drum studies.

Fill Book includes an MP3 CD of recorded fills in different tempos and a twelve-page insert of reading texts to aid the student in combining the exercises smoothly and efficiently. Furthermore, videos are available online at jostnickel.com, demonstrating the concepts in *Fill Book*. *Modern Drummer* recently spoke to Nickel to get to the history and philosophies behind his performance and instruction methods.

Marco Hammer

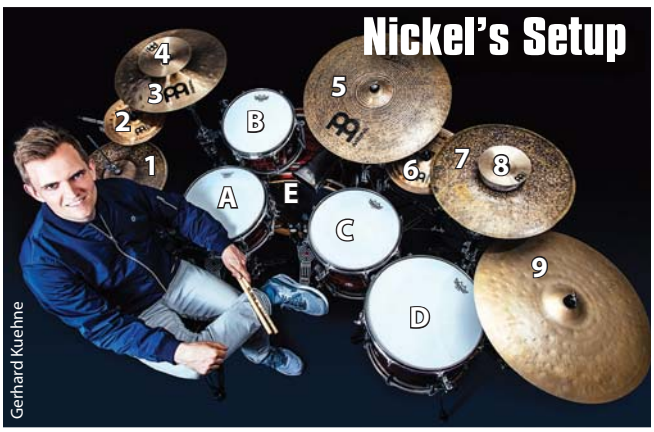
Marco Hammer

Gerhard Kuehne

"Counting is really for practicing. When practicing, I'm a lot more analytic than I am when I'm playing. It's like two different personalities."

MD: What's the benefit of a physical book over an online video?
Jost: The book is offline. You can really focus and you won't get distracted by things that can happen if you're using a computer. And you can carry it around. You can take notes. A book is the nicest, most old-school, most old-fashioned thing there is. I love drum books and books [in general]. I prefer having a book in my hands to reading [instruction] on a screen. When you learn a musical instrument, you have to dig deep on your own and focus on a subject. I stay away from YouTube videos unless I feel like I need some inspiration. Otherwise it's too distracting. I'd rather go to a concert and see a great band play.
MD: *Fill Book* is designed for beginners.
Jost: True, but if you play the exercises slowly, you can play the patterns. I did that when teaching seven and eight year olds. I practiced the first pages with them. It's challenging, but doable. What I wanted to show is that by using simple combinations of [notes played with the] hands and feet, you can make the exercises sound different through dynamics and orchestrations. These are very powerful tools. And the first chapter is fun, which is true in all my books.
MD: In Chapter 1 you use a static or repetitive right-hand rhythm as a basis for some complex exercises.
Jost: That makes sense if you're playing a fill that's not based on quarter notes, that in some way it will be circling around the quarter note. It might be groups of three or five or something else. It's very important that you know the underlying rhythm so that you can really hear what you're doing. The exercises are meant to help you realize what lies underneath the figure that you're playing. It's not so easy to understand if you only listen to the actual figure; you might lose sight of the phrasing of the fill. When I was learning and was unsure of the placement of the notes, I always went back to the rhythmical foundation of what I was doing. If you know the underlying rhythm and can hear it clearly, it's so much easier to have a fluid fill with good phrasing.
MD: Chapter 8 covers starting a phrase with your foot on the hi-hat instead of a stick on a drum or bass drum. That's unique.
Jost: Beginning a figure with your right foot doesn't always sound good, but most of the time it does. Vinnie Colaiuta does this on Sting's *Ten Summoner's Tales*. Roy Haynes also does this on various recordings. But Vinnie will play 16th notes on the hi-hat with the sticks, and play the final 16th before the backbeat with his hi-hat foot. That's a good general orchestration idea. You can do that with any figure, any fill, any groove where your bass drum typically plays a single stroke. You can use this concept to create your own ideas. The rhythmical concepts will never change, because in a bar of 4/4 time there will always be sixteen 16th notes. What changes is how you apply these rhythms, the dynamics, and how you combine the ideas.
MD: How do you suggest students approach *Fill Book*?
Jost: Don't learn these [exercises] to play on the gig. Play them in an improvisational manner. The book shows you how to get there. I made the ideas expressed in the book as similar as possible to avoid technical difficulty. The 16th notes begin with RLLF [where "F" represents the bass drum foot], and with 16th-note triplets it's two notes in advance of RLLF, so we have RLRLLF, so the group of four is in there as well. I wanted to make it accessible.
MD: How do you apply the exercises within a group format?
Jost: That's when your musicality kicks in. It totally depends on the band, the style of music, your tastes, their tastes…. But it definitely gives you material; if you want to play a fill and the opportunity is right, the song is right, the tempo is fine, and you need a very good fill in 16th-note triplets, then you have something you can use. But it still depends on so many musical questions that you need to answer first. The book gives you tools you can use when you feel like it's the right moment.
MD: You really stress counting out loud in *Fill Book*.
Jost: The value of counting aloud is twofold. The main thing is it strengthens your sense of the quarter-note pulse or the pulse of music in general. You don't want to count when you play. That's why you count when you practice. Even when working on the more challenging material in my book or elsewhere, you're always counting. One way is to count the quarter notes—"1, 2, 3, 4". The other way is just to say "click." That way you have to be more precise, because you're being more percussive. And if you say "click" rather than counting, then you have to *feel* where the 1 is. That really shortens the time you need in which you are able to feel all these things.

When I play, I never think of numbers or phrasing. When playing music that is not in 4/4, I *can* count if need be. But counting is really for practicing. When practicing, I'm a lot more analytic than I am when I'm playing. It's like two different personalities. The idea for counting aloud and saying "click" came from Gary Chester's book, *The New Breed*. It's the idea of using your voice to sing a rhythm and the quarter-note pulse.
MD: Beat displacement is also part of your skill set—any tips for that?
Jost: You can displace anything, but you need one idea that you don't change. You keep it the same, and then you start it at a different point in time—that's what displacement is. Hearing it



Drums: Sonor ProLite, SQ2, Vintage series, and SQ1
A. 6x14 ProLite brass snare
B. 8x12 tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 16x16 floor tom
E. 17x22 bass drum
Not shown: 5x12 AS 07 1205 AD Art Design aux snare

Percussion: Meinl STB80S-CH 8" cowbell

Hardware: Sonor 600 series

Heads: Remo, including Ambassador Coated snare batters and Ambassador snare sides, Emperor Coated tom batters and Diplomat Coated resonants, Powerstroke P3 Clear bass drum batter

Cymbals: Meinl
1. 14" Byzance Extra Dry Medium hi-hats
2. 10" Generation X Electro Stack GX-08/10ES
3. 18" Byzance Traditional Extra Thin Hammered crash
4. 8" Byzance Traditional splash
5. 22" Byzance Dark Spectrum ride
6. 12" Generation X Electro Stack GX-10/12ES
7. 18" Byzance Extra Dry Thin crash
8. 6" Byzance Traditional splash
9. 22" Byzance Vintage crash

Miscellaneous: Meinl TMPTS percussion table stand, Meinl drum rug, Ahead Armor cases, Beyerdynamic mics, Tune-Bot drum tuner

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B wood tip

correctly is the ultimate goal. That's why you count it. Do it on your leg—you can even do it in your head and just hear a phrase that sounds like it should start on 1. The accent of the figure is always the quarter note. Then practice to place it somewhere other than on the quarter note. Maybe it's the 8th-note offbeat—or any other position in the bar. It's just a matter of hearing it, and counting makes that easier.

MD: What's the most challenging part of the *Fill Book*, and how should students approach that material?

Jost: Technically, the material at the end of the book is the most challenging: the flam fills. It depends on the player. I think the book really guides you. Once you approach the flam chapter, you've hopefully internalized the rhythmic foundation of that chapter, because it's really a different application of the same rhythmic idea that has been introduced earlier in the book.

MD: What inspired you to include dead-sticking on cymbals and cymbal-grab mutes into your trick bag?

Jost: I'd heard a programmed beat that had cut-off cymbal sounds in it. At first I just wanted to copy that. I really like that characteristic sound in grooves and fills, and every time there's a sound I really dig, I'll try to use that in many different ways, like varying subdivisions and different groupings.

MD: How did you get up to speed with that technique?

Jost: I'll practice any new idea at medium tempos for a few weeks, until I really feel comfortable with the sound or with the flow or groove of the [concept]. When it finally feels great, I've played the specific idea for quite a long time, and then it's quite easy to speed it up because the phrasing of the idea is crystal clear. A lot of times the problem you have with playing something fast is that you can't hear the idea correctly at higher tempos.

MD: How do you teach the dead-sticking/cymbal-grab concept?

Jost: I only teach these ideas when people ask me, because it's so special that the student really needs to want to play it. I would just teach it like I show [it] in my book. Apply the idea to different groupings and then combine them.

MD: Your playing is extremely clean, but you never sound sterile. Can you offer any tips for arriving at that state of play?

Jost: Thanks. It all starts with having a rhythmical vision of how certain phrases sound. Every day I try to challenge myself rhythmically—even without a drumset. For example, you might not be able the hear the polyrhythm three over four properly, or not know the difference between three over four and four over three. That's something you can work on every day for ten minutes by tapping these rhythms on your lap. Since I've been doing that for a long time, I'm doing more advanced stuff just to challenge my ear. So especially in my *Fill Book* there are many exercises that will challenge your ear. You just have to accept that challenge!

The other thing I do is, when I sit down at the kit, I always make sure that I'm in control. We all know the difference between guessing and being sure. When a groove in a certain tempo doesn't feel right, I'll play that tempo until I feel good with it. It might take minutes, days, or weeks. And when I practice, I choose tempos that are harder to play than others. You know, these in-between tempos that every drummer finds awkward.

MD: What snare studies did you shed? Did you focus on being clean? Even your fast singles between floor tom and bass drum are spotless.

Ingo Baron

Jost: My first teacher, Peter Weise, from Kiel, Germany, made me play Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*, and I enjoyed it.

MD: You play with tremendous delicacy and subtlety. At first it doesn't knock you over with its complexity, but then the cumulative effect of the many complex figures and grooves you play with such clarity becomes awe-inspiring. How did you develop delicacy and subtlety, both as physical "things" and mental concepts?

Jost: Thanks again! First, I never try to impress anybody. I myself am most impressed or touched by musicality, not by chops. I know that there are readers, especially the younger ones, that are really into fast and loud, and I'm perfectly fine with that. We all love different things about drums and music in general. I'm into certain sounds that might be more on the subtle side of drumming that I then take through different subdivisions and orchestrations. That's just my thing. And I think eventually we all end up doing what we like. One person wants to play metal, the next person is into Brazilian music, and so on. I strongly believe that you just cannot practice stuff that you don't really like.

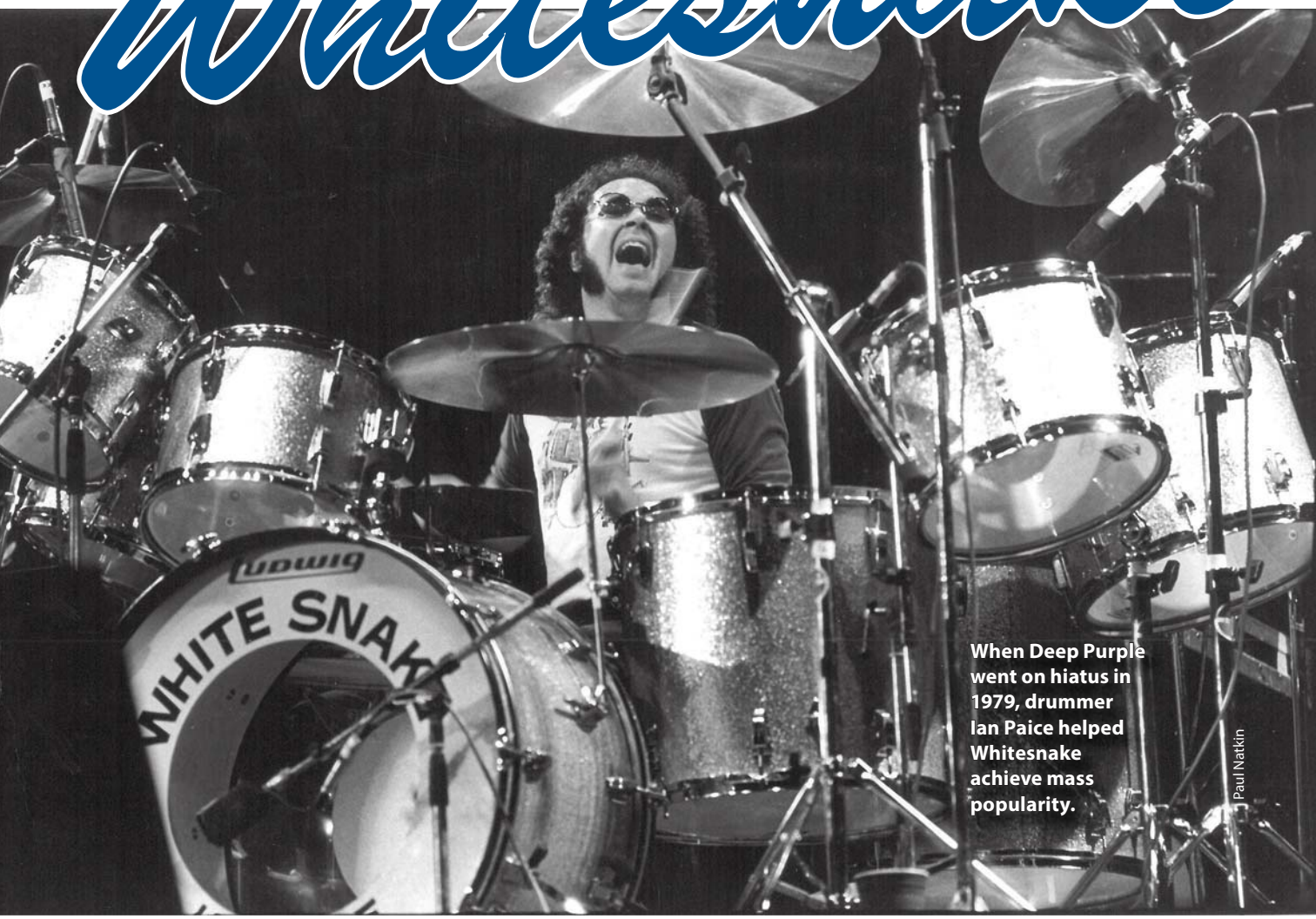
MD: And the fluidity?

Jost: I think the fluidity comes from clarity. You have to hear it right, or you can't play it. I actually never spent a lot of time thinking about the physical side of drumming; I wanted to make it *sound* good. Too much thinking about your movements can really spoil your playing, because you start to think too much about moving in a certain way. To me it's more about trying to bring ideas across, and my main focus is the sound, not how I move.

MD: Do you come from a musical family?

Jost: My parents both play classical instruments. My mother had people coming to our house to play classical pieces together. At one point she suggested that I take piano lessons, which was my start with music. Then I did a ten-week intensive course at Drummer's Collective in New York, and the rest is history!

8 Reasons to Love Whitesnake



When Deep Purple went on hiatus in 1979, drummer Ian Paice helped Whitesnake achieve mass popularity.

Paul Natkin

Whitesnake formed soon after the dissolution of the Mark IV lineup of Deep Purple, when singer David Coverdale combined his love of blues, rock, heavy metal, funk, and soul into a blustery amalgam of white-hot riffs and soaring vocal pyrotechnics.

The band quickly found its footing musically—the material showcasing brilliant playing from each member across the board—but chart success proved to be elusive for years. Also elusive was any sort of consistency in the drummer department, with a Spinal Tap–like change from legend to legend across several albums.

A close examination of the list of players who manned the Whitesnake drumkit reveals that while each musician had his own unique sound and flavor, the drumming was always in service of the primary goal of the band, and that was, unequivocally, to *rock*. From a young Simon Phillips proving his pocket mettle to Ian Paice's rock-solid groove to Tommy Aldridge's famous double bass work to Brian Tichy's controlled assault, Whitesnake's drummers are a who's who of classic rock royalty and modern badasses, each one burning bright for the briefest of times before being succeeded by the next guy in line. Here, then, are eight reasons to love Whitesnake.

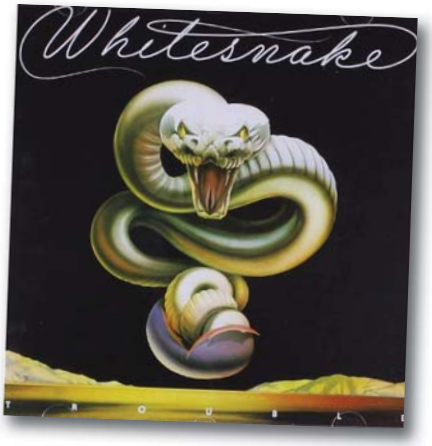
By Ilya Stemkovsky

David Coverdale *White Snake* (1977) Simon Phillips

A footnote in Whitesnake history, the first post-Deep Purple release from David Coverdale was this collection of bluesy rock and soul featuring a nineteen-year-old Simon Phillips playing killer grooves with deep pocket and maturity. The Robert Palmer–esque "Goldies Place" is a slow R&B workout, complete with horns, electric piano, and Phillips' sweet, behind-the-beat drumming, all tom jabs and slick kick syncopations. The up shuffle of the title track allows Phillips to work out on the cymbals, before a half-time breakdown lets things build back into tempo for a guitar solo that ends with an outrageous flams-and-singles drum fill that will blow your hair back. On the funky "Celebration," Phillips brings some tasty disco hi-hats and locks in with the percussion for propulsive drive that doesn't quit. Phillips' time in the Whitesnake world would be short-lived, as his presence here amounts to session work, and the band would reform with other members and a more aggressive sound. But Coverdale's first solo statement is undeniably a fun one.

Trouble (1978) Dave Dowle

The first proper Whitesnake record, *Trouble* is the real bridge between the proto-metal Purple sound and the rock juggernaut the band would become, and contains some excellent work from drummer Dave Dowle. Check out the hip hi-hat-and-ghost-note pattern on "Love to Keep You Warm," with Dowle and bassist Neil Murray laying down an unshakable rhythm, each whipping out fill after fill that doesn't distract. "Nighthawk (Vampire Blues)" might as well be a Return to Forever outtake, as Dowle plays a rocking, syncopated pattern and leans in on his crashes and ride bell. Also dig the four-on-the-floor kick underneath the burning shuffle of "Belgian Tom's Hat Trick" and the exciting drum solo intro to "Free Flight" for a further taste of Dowle's brilliance. The drummer would also appear on 1979's *Lovehunter* and the 1978 selections from the concert document *Live…in the Heart of the City*. Changes were brewing, though, and soon the band would have three ex–Deep Purple members in it.



Come an' Get It (1981) Ian Paice

An old friend, Ian Paice, joined Whitesnake for 1980's *Ready an' Willing,* at which point the band included him on drums, Coverdale, and keyboardist Jon Lord. With that record, Whitesnake enjoyed their first taste of commercial success, and *Come an' Get It* would chart even higher while also allowing the band to really gel into a cohesive unit. Paice rips through "Hot Stuff" with an insistent snare attack and grooves hard on "Girl" with airtight hi-hats and tough flams. Check out Paice's approach on "Hit an' Run" for subtle kick-drum work and a lesson on how to move between sections while sounding powerful. Of note is Paice's beautiful, dry, and natural Martin Birch–produced drum sound. The group was still a few years away from their radio-dominating hair-metal phase, so those looking for straight-ahead riff-rock glory would be advised to give this era a listen. Paice would also appear on 1982's *Saints and Sinners.*

Slide It In (1984) Cozy Powell

The 1980s were not kind to many classic rockers, but Coverdale and company had their sound down to a science by 1984, and no current musical flavors would deter the band from continuing to rock hard. For *Slide It In*, Cozy Powell was enlisted to captain the ship, and he brought with him attitude and a most monolithic bass drum. He works ride-cymbal offbeats on "Gambler" and slithers his way through the start/stop hits in "Slow an' Easy" with precision and just the right amount of space. And speaking of bass drums, check out the pummeling "All or Nothing" for verses with trucking, forceful kick work, and an organ solo with a cool snare-and-tom pattern that's big yet the perfect accompaniment. Whitesnake were one album away from unimaginable album sales and touring success—and, as had been established, facing yet another drum-chair lineup change.

8 Reasons to Love Whitesnake

Whitesnake (1987) Aynsley Dunbar

Whitesnake hit the super big time with their self-titled album released in 1987, and though Tommy Aldridge would do the touring, it's Aynsley Dunbar's massive drums that adorn the hits that filled the radio airwaves. Still, this wasn't any neutered pop metal-lite, with much of the same heavy rock that fans had come to expect from the band. Dunbar is full steam ahead on the uber-shuffle of "Give Me All Your Love" and lays down the meanest, most unrelenting groove on "Bad Boys," sprinkling in thick snare and tom fills as needed. But check out the drummer's subtle work on the chill "Is This Love," on which Dunbar plays an understated single floor-tom hit right into the top of the verse with no crash on the downbeat. Sure, the reverb on the snare was as big as the teased hair, but this was the path to get on MTV, and Whitesnake now suddenly had something previously rare populating their audience: women.

Slip of the Tongue (1989) Tommy Aldridge

Tommy Aldridge was retained for the follow-up studio album, 1989's *Slip of the Tongue*, and brought with him brilliant rock power and his trademark fancy footwork. Check out the slick double bass on the half-time breakdowns on the title track and the driving cowbell and big toms supporting the vocals in the sparse, drums-are-all-that's-needed-here interlude in "Cheap an' Nasty." Aldridge brings the powerful, "Kashmir"-like hugeness in "Judgement Day," keeping things to a low-boil minimum, moving from hi-hats to his ride for just the slightest change that feels grander. The sound was moving further away from the blues-rock of the early years, but the songs were still executed at the highest level. With a rhythm section including bassist Rudy Sarzo and guitarist Steve Vai, who recorded the album in place of an injured Adrian Vandenberg, Whitesnake continued to feature the cream-of-the-crop musicians the band had always flaunted, and Aldridge fit right in with chops and a sneer.

Good to Be Bad (2008) Chris Frazier

After a long break between official albums (1997's *Restless Heart* with drummer Denny Carmassi was never released in the U.S.), the band returned for another studio offering, 2008's *Good to Be Bad*, and the drummer musical chairs continued with Chris Frazier now behind the skins. Coverdale was getting longer in the tooth, but that wasn't stopping his vocals from reaching great heights, and his band was right there alongside him with a clenched fist and technical fluency. Echoes of the Allman Brothers Band's "Whipping Post" ring out on the triple-feel propulsion in "Best Years," with Frazier syncopating his bass drum pattern and snapping off dramatic snare fills. Elsewhere he leans into his open hi-hats for the verses and lays down quarter-note snares during the choruses of the rocking yet funky "Call on Me." Also check out Frazier's swinging 12/8 groove on "A Fool in Love," a nice throwback to the Whitesnake style of long ago.

Forevermore (2011) Brian Tichy

You guessed it—another drummer, this time Brian Tichy, joined Whitesnake for the recording of *Forevermore*, and he continued to kick the band into the blues-rock territory they'd now been slowly returning to, while still bringing the aggressive, hard rock drumming that fit the other side of the band. Tichy is all kick and hi-hat stomp in the mini-breaks of "Steal Your Heart Away," and he brings ride-bell authority on the choruses of "Love Will Set You Free." Dig the drum intro in "My Evil Ways" before the drummer gallops double time underneath the big riffs with weight and attacks his China during the guitar solo. Tichy sounds like he's hitting hard, but he's never dominating the proceedings.

Tommy Aldridge returned for 2015's *The Purple Album*, and Whitesnake shows no signs of slowing down, with yet another album on the way. Who knows who'll play drums in the near or distant future, but we know we'll be listening.

Essential Cymbal Patterns

Fundamental Figures to Spice Up Your Grooves

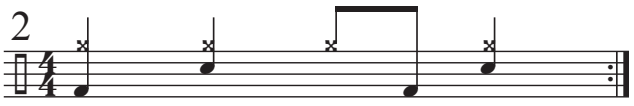
by Powell Randolph

In this lesson we'll utilize different cymbal patterns to change the feel of your grooves and phrases. First let's take a look at the kick and snare pattern that we'll be using throughout this lesson.

1

Exercise 2 adds quarter notes on the hi-hat to create a driving pulse.

2

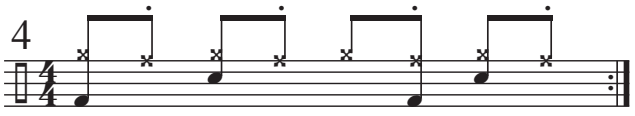


Exercise 3 incorporates the ride bell, giving this pattern an upbeat feel.

3

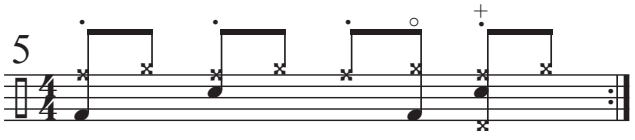
In Exercise 4 we'll combine the patterns from Exercises 2 and 3 by alternating between the hi-hat and the ride bell.

4



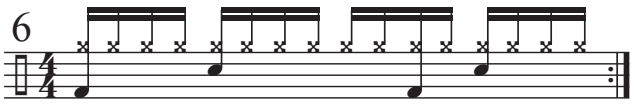
Try playing the ride bell on the downbeats and the hi-hat on the upbeats, as demonstrated in this next example.

5



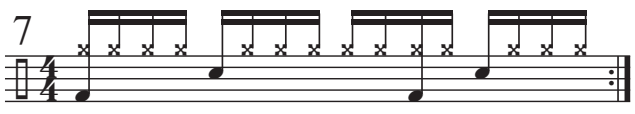
Exercise 6 employs a one-handed 16th-note hi-hat pattern that's similar to the one Neil Peart played on Rush's classic track "Tom Sawyer."

6



We can also play the 16th-note hi-hat pattern using both hands with an alternating sticking, as demonstrated in Exercise 7.

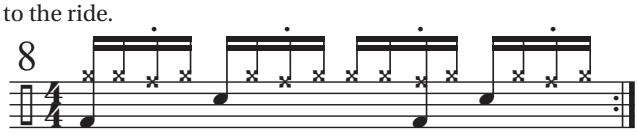
7



R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Using the hand-to-hand 16th-note sticking from the previous example, let's move the right hand to the ride bell on the "&" of each beat. This creates an alternating pattern in the right hand among the hi-hat, ride, and snare before returning to the ride.

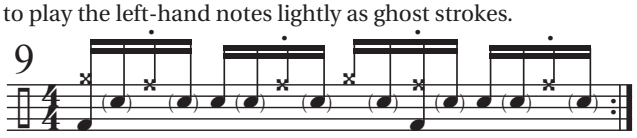
8



R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

In Exercise 9 we'll utilize the same sticking pattern from the previous example but move the left hand to the snare. Be sure to play the left-hand notes lightly as ghost strokes.

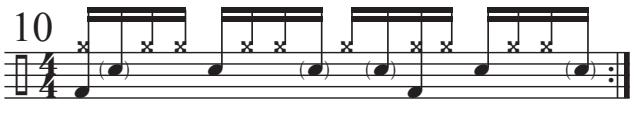
9



R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Now try a mixed sticking pattern, such as the one that's demonstrated in Exercise 10.

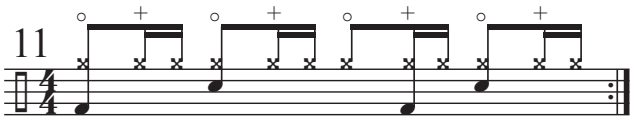
10



R L R R L R R L R L R R L R R L

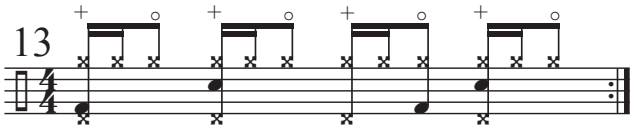
Exercises 11–14 employ combinations of 8th and 16th notes. In Exercises 11 and 13, try opening the hi-hat on the "&" of each beat.

11



12

13



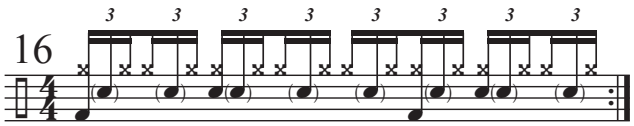
14

Now try linear patterns around the kick and snare foundation. Here's an example.

15

R R L R L R L R L R R L R L R

In this next exercise we'll use a 16th-note-triplet subdivision to play a shuffle feel.



In this last example we'll play the ride pattern on the floor tom with some 16th notes to fill in around the kick and snare.

I hope that these examples give you many ideas to add to your musical choices when you're coming up with grooves for a song. Remember to let your ears be the judge of what works best. These are just a few ideas to get you started. You could also experiment with riding on other sound sources, such as the rims, the snare, a mounted tambourine, or a cowbell. You can even try playing a shaker in your ride hand. Have fun, and see you next time!

Powell Randolph is a drum teacher at Alpha Music in Virginia Beach and plays rock shows with orchestras around North America for Windburn Music Productions. Randolph, a tongue cancer survivor, can be reached through powellrandolph.com.

Flam Ostinatos

A Creative Approach to a Drumming Staple

by Luis Ricardo Méndez

In the context of contemporary hybrid rudiments, the flam has been used in different ways to create some new and exciting patterns. Inspired by some of these modern hybrid combinations, I've come up with a concept to add yet another dimension to rudimental drumming, drumset playing, and percussion in general. I call the concept the "flam ostinato." Given a constant flow of notes, you can create an ostinato that incorporates flams while playing rhythmic phrases that are built on accent patterns.

Let's start with the following samba-inspired phrase as the basis of an ostinato.

Now let's add grace notes to this rhythm.

And now let's incorporate this rhythm into a constant 16th-note flow, creating an ostinato based on flams.

We can play any accented rhythmic phrase along with that ostinato, as demonstrated in Exercise 4.

When we put the ostinato and the accent phrase together, we get a new, challenging pattern. This is the basis for the flam-ostinato concept.

There are several rhythmic layers occurring: the constant 16th-note flow, the flam-based ostinato, and the accented phrase. The combination of these elements creates an interesting technical and musical challenge. It also encourages independence of execution between the accented notes and the flams. Since both the flam ostinato and the accent phrases occupy the same subdivision, you should strive to make each element of the phrase clear for yourself and the listener. The player should be able to accent any note within the ostinato to develop the ability to create and, ultimately, improvise different phrases.

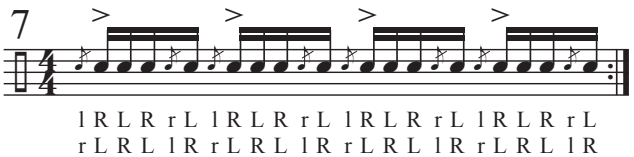
Developing the Concept

Often we're taught to play flams with an unaccented grace note and an accented primary note. However, in order for the flam-ostinato to work, we must first learn to play the flams and the regular notes at the same dynamic level (generally soft), without accents.

Let's begin by practicing the previous ostinato on the snare. Notice the consistent hand-to-hand sticking.

Play all unaccented notes from a low position (two to three inches from the head), and avoid the tendency to accent the primary note of the flams. Start slow, and gradually increase the speed as you feel more comfortable. Practice this ostinato by leading with both hands, as doing so presents two different coordination challenges.

Once we can play the ostinato smoothly at different tempos, we can start to incorporate accents. Be careful to accent only the marked 16th notes in the following examples. We can also omit the accents in parentheses to create a few more variations.



12

l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L
r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R

13

l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L
r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R

14

l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L
r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R

Once you're comfortable with the previous patterns, try the following one-bar phrases.

15

l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L
r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R

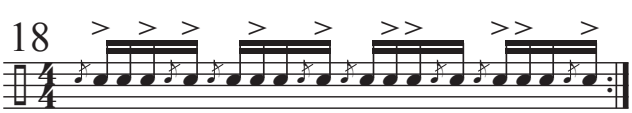
16

l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L
r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R

17

l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L
r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R

18



l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L l R L R r L
r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R r L R L l R

For additional practice, try combining the previous examples to create two-bar phrases. Or better yet, come up with some variations of your own. These are just a few ideas to get you started.

It could take some time to master this material, but with patience and diligent practice, you'll see results. Happy practicing!

Luis Ricardo Méndez is a Venezuelan drummer with wide-ranging playing experience in pop bands and symphony orchestras. He has a degree in percussion performance, and he's currently finishing his studies of Latin American musicology at the Central University of Venezuela. Méndez can be reached at luis_ricardrums@hotmail.com.

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Buddy Rich

"Stars and Stripes Forever"

by Eric Fischer

ONLINE LESSON
moderndrummer.com

By 1929, a twelve-year-old Buddy Rich was already a seasoned performer, having been an integral part of his parents' vaudeville act since he was eighteen months old. According to Mel Tormé's biography of Rich, *Traps: The Drum Wonder*, with the days of vaudeville waning, Rich was approached by the Vitaphone studios to film a one-reel movie short. Tormé explains that *Buddy Traps in "Sound Effects"* is the drummer's first-known recording and consists of the numbers "That Wonderful Boy Friend of Mine," "Am I Blue?" "If You Were Mine," "Bashful Baby," and "Stars and Stripes Forever."

Unfortunately the film portion of the short is lost. However, the audio survived and has been available in online trading circles for years. More recently it has surfaced on YouTube. The first four songs feature Buddy tap-dancing, singing, and drumming on various household objects in what's described as a music store. The finale, "Stars and Stripes Forever," was already a staple of Buddy's young career by the time this was recorded. When he first hit the vaudeville stages, Rich played this number with only drumsticks on a wooden chair. On *Buddy Traps in "Sound Effects,"* he played the song on a drumset consisting of a snare, a bass drum, a ride cymbal, and a China cymbal.

A full transcription of this version of "Stars and Stripes Forever" is available at moderndrummer.com, along with a MIDI sequence of Buddy's drum track. Follow along with the sheet music and the reduced-speed MIDI sequence of his performance to learn this challenging piece. The following are some excerpts from the transcription with suggested stickings. Let's dive in!

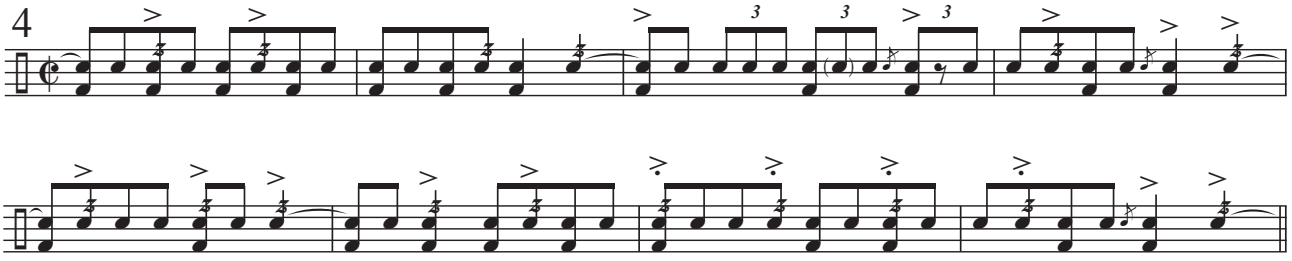
This abbreviated arrangement of John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever" consists of certain sections of a typical American march structure: the trio (main melody), breakstrain (interlude), and grandioso (finale). After the introductory bugle call, "Assembly," Rich plays a rudimental figure on the snare that leads into the trio section of "Stars and Stripes Forever." Following a brief fade-in, we hear Buddy's crisp buzz rolls, buzz strokes, and mixed rhythms of 8th notes and 8th-note triplets at the 0:19 mark. Buzz strokes are abundant in Buddy's interpretation; he uses them to create strong, syncopated phrases throughout the piece. Also, the drummer's highly evolved bass drum playing stands out—it doesn't merely keep time; it accents and shapes the arrangement.

This isn't your typical march, and it owes more to early New Orleans jazz drumming than to traditional rudimental pieces. The 8th notes are slightly swung, and Buddy is reacting to the music while improvising along the way. When listening to the recording, I had to remind myself that this was the playing of a twelve year old in 1929. Buddy was truly ahead of his time.

The next excerpt at 0:26 demonstrates some of Buddy's rimshot work and foreshadows the spirited playing that would come later in his career. The rimshots' syncopation is enhanced by the steady underpinning of the bass drum. This pattern recalls the rhythmic phrasing of Chick Webb and Gene Krupa.

Buddy's remarkable control at this early age is particularly evident in his dynamic buzz rolls. When the opening phrase of the trio section is repeated at 0:29, Buddy plays a three-measure buzz roll with an 8th-note pulse and accents on the upbeats, adding an impressive drive to this passage. Later in the piece, he uses other variations in place of the 8th-note feel to signal further changes in the arrangement.

The following phrase at 0:33 begins with an underlying quarter-note bass drum pattern with syncopated buzz strokes on the snare. It leads into an intricate phrase of 8th-note triplets followed by a flam on the "&" of beat 2. In the last two measures of the phrase at 0:38, the ensemble plays sparsely, allowing Rich to fill the space with accented buzz strokes on every third 8th note. This figure creates a four-over-three polyrhythm—advanced playing for 1929.



In the breakstrain section, Buddy complements the ensemble figure with the following pattern at 0:47.

In this phrase at 0:56, the drummer fills into the quarter-note ensemble figures with 8th notes that are peppered with a buzz stroke and rimshot.

When the phrase at the beginning of the grandioso section is repeated at 1:20, Rich plays a strong dotted-8th- and 16th-note shuffle rhythm that dramatically changes the feel leading into the final measures of the piece. In the third measure of this excerpt at 1:23, there's a distinct buzz note that's composed of four strokes, another demonstration of his exceptional technique.

"Stars and Stripes Forever" showcases the key features of Buddy's early drumming style that would help propel his iconic career. His technique, time, and taste are already highly developed at such an early age. At twelve years old, Buddy was a veteran professional musician and well on his way to becoming one of the world's greatest drummers.

Eric Fischer is the co-author of the book and DVD package *Drum Wars: Realistic Drum Solos Unfolded*, with Carmine and Vinny Appice. Eric also produced the DVD *Carl Palmer: Drum Solos*. For more information, visit ericfischer.info.

Latin Jazz Drumming

Part 2: Mambo Bell Variations

by Steve Fidyk

Welcome to the second installment of our series focusing on mambo bell patterns that are based on a 2:3 clave. This month we'll explore rhythms and variations that can be substituted for the traditional bell pattern.

This article's inspiration came from performances I've done with Afro-Cuban musicians, as well as discussions I've had with them regarding what approach to take when playing with two or more percussionists. As a jazz drummer who has high regard for this style, I felt that it was important to fit into the mambo's rhythmic fabric and phrasing without destroying its integrity and beauty.

I've come to learn that in many ways it's easier to perform this style when you have the help and "weight" of congas, bongos, and timbales accompanying the composition. I also learned that this style comprises equal parts jazz and Afro-Cuban phrasing, and that it's perfectly fine to play with a looser, jazz-like approach on the drumset in conjunction with the traditional percussion instruments. Perhaps viewing mambo through this lens can help lead to improvisations that are less repetitive or static and more conversational in nature.

A perfect example of this looser approach can be heard in the mambo style of Elvin Jones on the seminal John Coltrane recording *A Love Supreme*. Elvin's playing with Coltrane reflects both traditional mambo and improvisation in a very elegant way. Another excellent example of this type of fusion can be heard in Peter Erskine's mambo playing with large and small ensembles. Both drumming legends present a thread of consistency in that their rhythmic ideas and choices relate back to the composition and are in the musical moment.

As mentioned in Part 1 of this series, Dizzy Gillespie and conguero Chano Pozo helped usher mambo playing into the jazz lexicon during the late 1940s by combining traditional mambo rhythms with the modern rhythmic approach of bebop. Compared to traditional mambo, this new combination netted more of a flexible rhythmic phrasing that could be played with a straight or swung feel.

Dizzy Gillespie's important 1954 recording, *Afro*, illustrates this combination. The composition "Manteca Theme," cowritten by Gillespie, Chano Pozo, and Gil Fuller, is featured on this album and is considered by many to be the first jazz piece that's based on a 2:3 clave pattern.

The following two-measure horn rhythms are transcribed from the introduction of "Manteca Theme." These rhythms are followed by bell pattern variations that are loosely based on the original three transcriptions.

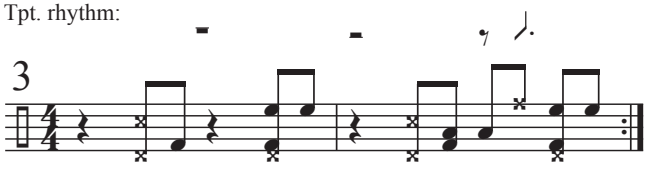
Once you can play each of the transcribed horn rhythms and bell patterns with control, return to Part 1 of this series, and try combining this new material with the previous left-hand phrases and foot variations. The looser, more improvised bell patterns coupled with the traditional rhythms underneath make for a perfect combination.

Horn Rhythms

Sax. rhythm:

Tbn. rhythm:

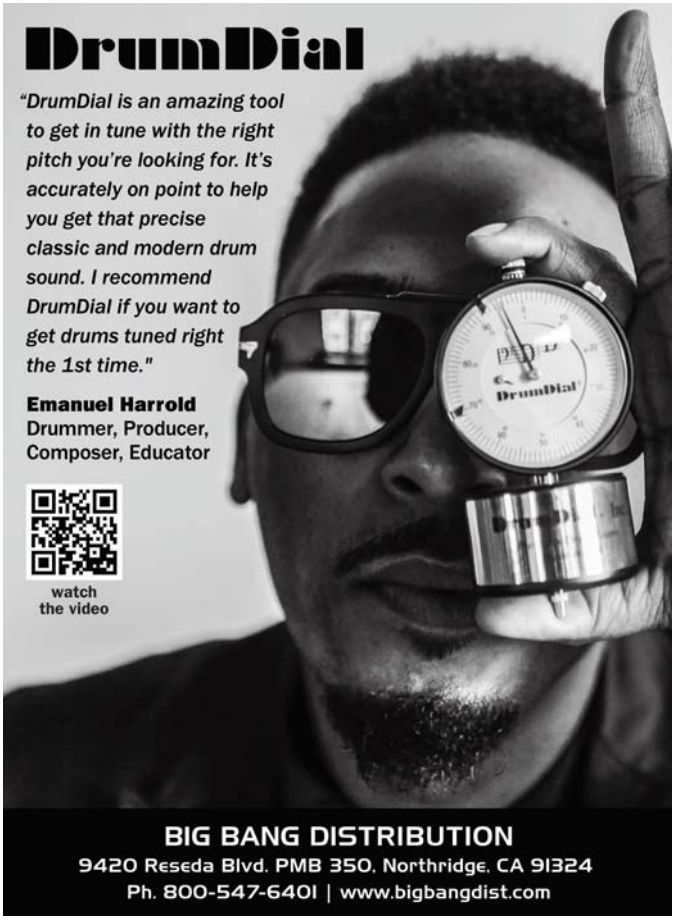
Tpt. rhythm:



Bell Pattern Variations

Remember to take your time when combining the hands and feet. Be patient with your progress, and practice each example with a metronome. A good starting tempo would be 84 bpm or slower. Next time we'll examine jazz adaptations of the mambo bell rhythm in 3/2. Enjoy!

Steve Fidyk has performed with Terell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Doc Severinsen, Wayne Bergeron, Phil Wilson, and Maureen McGovern, and he's a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more information, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit stevefidyk.com.



Sticking Patterns for Odd Groupings

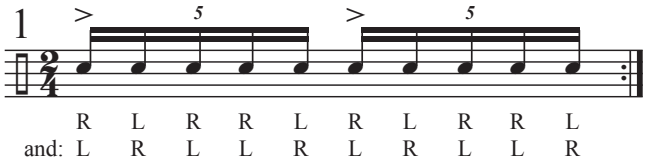
Getting Comfortable with Fives and Sevens

by Aaron Edgar

Utilizing unique sticking patterns can yield plenty of interesting orchestrations on the drumset, especially when those stickings differ in length from a given subdivision. They can also help you feel odd subdivisions when you're using a particular sticking that does fit evenly within less common groupings.

In this lesson we'll explore a few sticking patterns within quintuplets and septuplets. Some stickings fit evenly within the groupings and help establish a better understanding of how the subdivision feels, while others are designed to contrast with the pulse to create a polyrhythmic feel.

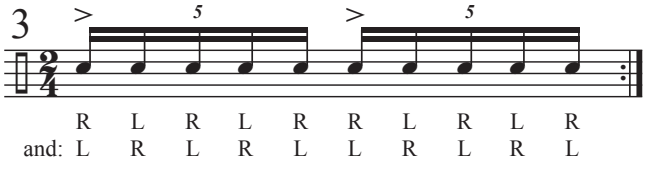
Exercise 1 demonstrates a common five-note sticking (RLRRL). Practice this on a pad first. Once it feels comfortable, move your left hand to a quieter surface, such as your leg, to leave only the right hand's rhythm on the pad. The goal is to maintain the quintuplet subdivision while only hearing your right hand's rhythm.



Be sure to practice this next example, as well as Exercises 3, 5, and 7, on a practice pad to develop this sticking's dynamic consistency. Try to play it evenly so that you can't hear a difference between each hand's sound. Accenting the right hand does sound interesting, but it's not particularly musical if you can only play the pattern in that manner.

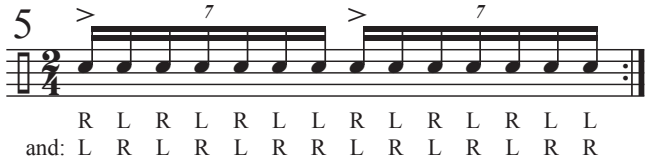
In Exercise 2 we'll embellish the sticking pattern by incorporating the toms. Placing your right hand on a floor tom and your left on a rack tom creates a great melodic phrase. When practicing this example, imagine that you're listening to a bass or timpani line.

With most stickings, permutation reveals hidden rhythmic treasures. Exercise 3 displaces the pattern forward by two notes (RLRLR). When first practicing this example, try to avoid hearing it as a permutation of Exercise 1, and treat it as if it's an entirely new phrase. When it sounds consistent on the pad, try orchestrating it on your toms.



We can also incorporate the hi-hat with ghost notes on the snare to hear the pattern within the context of a groove. Exercise 4 embellishes the RLRLR sticking slightly to create a funky groove between the hi-hat and snare. These types of patterns work best with a wide dynamic range—playing the ghost strokes as quietly as possible will help the accents clearly "pop" out.

Now let's try these same concepts with septuplets. Exercise 5 demonstrates a common seven-note sticking pattern on the practice pad (RLRLRLL). Treat it the same way as we did Exercise 1, and concentrate on developing dynamic consistency between the hands.



Exercise 6 orchestrates the pattern on the toms. This time, once it's comfortable, try moving your right hand to different voices around the drumset.

Exercises 7 and 8 explore one of my favorite seven-note stickings: RLLRRLL. First we'll practice it on a pad, and then we'll orchestrate it on the hi-hat and snare to create a funky groove. Although it's not notated, playing this sticking on the toms creates a great melody.

After working your way through the previous examples, go back and explore each of the pad and tom examples with a left-hand lead.

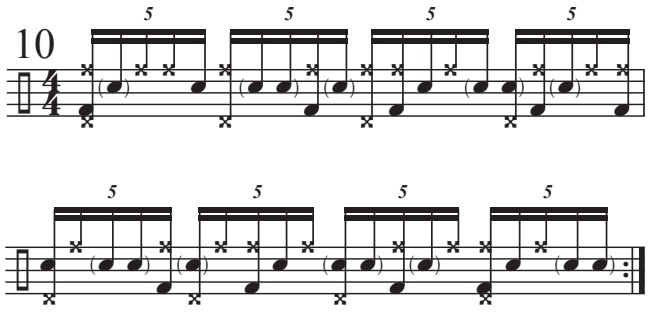
Now that we've checked out some patterns that fit evenly within quintuplet and septuplet groupings, it's time to explore stickings that differ in length from both of those subdivisions. Exercise 9 places paradiddles within quintuplets, with accents

on the first note of each paradiddle played on alternating toms. The resulting accent pattern yields a five-over-four polyrhythm.

Treat these examples as rhythmic puzzles. Considering the previous exercise, you might find it challenging to feel each of the tom accents within the quintuplets properly. But the beauty of these exercises is that you'll have to focus on every partial of each subdivision throughout the phrase, as each partial is accented at various points within the pattern. Most polyrhythms work in this way, with each accent cycling through every partial of the contrasting layer's subdivision before the figure resolves.

You may also find it difficult at first to confidently feel the quarter-note pulse while playing these polyrhythmic figures, and these final two examples will certainly test that ability. In both phrases, it could be easy to hear the four-note paradiddle groupings as 16th notes, but your goal is to stay in a 4/4 perspective. Use the following exercises to learn how to feel the offbeat quintuplet and septuplet kick and snare rhythms in the same way that you'd feel any placement of a 16th note. Be patient, and isolate any beats that give you trouble.

In Exercise 10, a syncopated bass drum pattern provides an additional challenge. If it's giving you too much trouble, simply play quarter notes on the kick until you're comfortable, and then try the notated pattern.

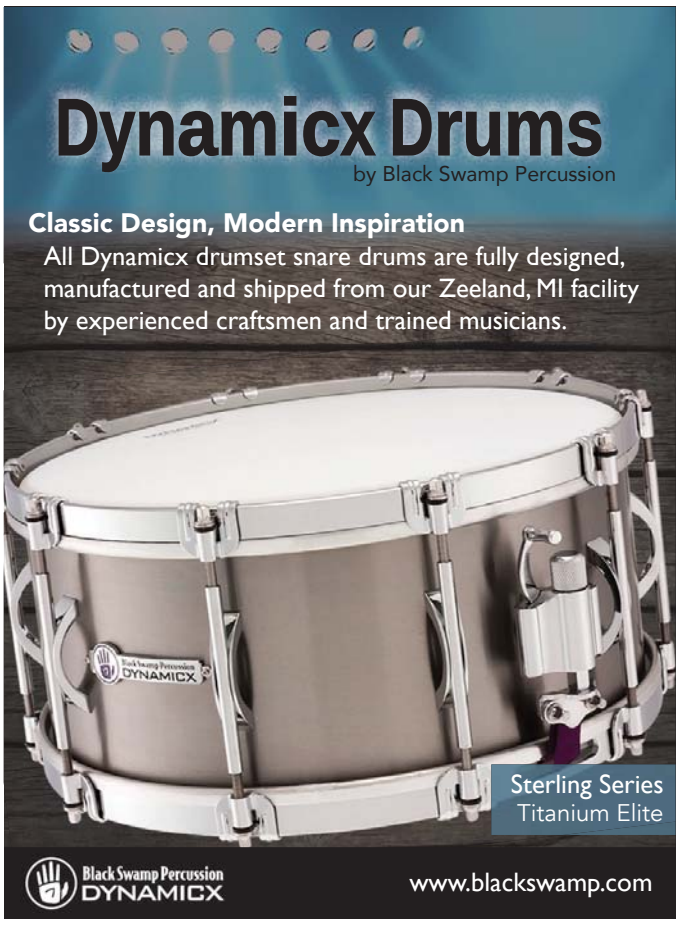


Exercise 11 is written with a simplified quarter-note bass drum pattern. When it feels comfortable, explore your own kick variations. When I was first learning these concepts, I'd get the hand pattern going with quarter notes on my hi-hat foot. Then I'd add in the bass drum notes one at a time until each beat felt comfortable. Eventually you'll build up to the entire pattern.

If your hands start to feel like they're playing straight paradiddles with a strange kick or hi-hat pattern underneath, you're most likely feeling these last two exercises from a 16th-note perspective. To mentally reset, put your sticks down, take a breath, and count yourself back in while focusing on the quarter-note pulse. It also may be helpful to play quintuplet or septuplet singles instead of the paradiddles to reset your mind.

In the previous two exercises, your rhythmic perspective is the most important aspect to develop. Ignoring how you feel these patterns can be a form of negative practice that reinforces incorrect aspects of these concepts.

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. His latest book, *Progressive Drumming Essentials*, is available through Modern Drummer Publications. For more information, visit moderndrummer.com.



Fear, Ego, and Overplaying

The Driving Forces Behind Forcing Chops

by Dave Stark

Overplaying—whether you've been aware of it or not, you've probably done it at some point in your musical journey. Some might say that overplaying is how you work out what fits and what doesn't as you're learning your instrument. During practice, overplaying is a healthy way to figure out how to apply things you've been studying within a musical context. But what about when you're on stage, in the studio, or at an audition? That's a whole other situation.

Fear of Being Judged

I often cringe listening to old recordings of myself because of how much I overplayed. Why was I forcing notes into spaces where they weren't needed? One of the reasons is simple: fear.

I recall reading a piece in which the great groove player Steve Jordan was talking about drummers feeling a need to constantly prove themselves, especially when playing in a new situation. We need to let go of that desire to show other players just how good we are. It might start with a few tiny embellishments on the hi-hat, but soon we're cluttering up the groove with ghost notes and accents that aren't necessary. Why does this happen to us so often? In many cases, we're doing it to impress someone, whether it's the bass player or another musician in the room.

Fear is one of our most intense motivators. At times fear is necessary, especially when it comes to ensuring personal safety in sketchy situations. But emotional insecurity is much less beneficial, especially when it comes to making music with other people. In reality, that bass player, or whoever else you're trying to impress, just wants you to lock into your parts. That's what will ultimately make *them* sound good.

We need to drop that part of our ego that compels us to constantly up the difficulty level in our playing. If anything, the opposite is often a better approach. Instead of worrying about what you're going to add to the music, focus on exactly what you're being asked to do. What does the gig call for? What are the other players looking for from you?

When I started asking myself these questions, my playing became more focused and deliberate, translating into more nods of approval from my bandmates than ever before. Also, the less I allowed myself to think like a fearful drummer with something to prove, the more I got hired. I'm no longer concerned that if I walk into a room of musicians I'm going to be judged by how many notes I can execute. I'm there to serve the music and to make the other musicians sound as good as possible.

Check Me Out, Man!

Another cause of overplaying is what I call "check me out" syndrome, which refers to the inability to play more than a few measures of a groove without throwing in a fill or syncopation just to feed your ego. I suffered from this for many years as well. It manifests itself often when you learn a new lick and can't resist throwing it out there on a gig, whether it was musically appropriate or not. Whenever you fall into this pattern of behavior, you might as well be waving to the audience and shouting, "Hey, look over here! Pay attention to me!"

A good cure for selfish overplaying is to record your gigs and rehearsals and listen with an empathetic ear. Try to listen to yourself as if you were the bass player, guitarist, or vocalist. Would you want the drums sounding like that behind *your* singing? Are the drums completely locking in with the bass parts?

Another good thing to do is to sit in at a local blues jam. When it's your turn to play, focus on the groove, and really lock it in. Don't add any extra notes or cymbal crashes. When you dig deep into the pocket, the bass player won't be able to keep from smiling. I guarantee it.

Dave Stark is an endorsing artist for Zildjian, GMS, Vic Firth, Evans, Solomon Mics, Tru-Tuner, and Drum Muff.

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Drumset Ergonomics

Part 5: Positioning the Hi-Hat, Ride, and Rack Toms

by Brandon Green

ONLINE LESSON
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Welcome back! The final two articles in this series will focus on the placement of primary and secondary suspended instruments, with an emphasis on preserving shoulder health. Primary suspended instruments are the ones we play most often (hi-hat, ride, and rack toms). They are usually positioned close to your neutral line of sight when you're seated at the drumset.

Discovering optimal positions for the primary suspended instruments requires exploring some basic physics and human mechanics. The goal is to make reaching them as effortless as possible for the muscular system and to reduce risk of injury. Because most of our playing is on these instruments, they need to be placed in an orientation that allows your body position to have as little negative effect on your system as possible. In my opinion, poor body position is one of the main reasons drummers end up with tendinitis, golfer's/tennis elbow, carpal tunnel syndrome, and other wrist, elbow, and shoulder injuries.

With a quick assessment of your own body, a little scientific data, and an idea of how you want your kit to look, you will be able to create a unique and customized configuration that will keep you playing for many years to come.

Modeling Your Idols

To some degree, most of us determine the look of our setups based on those of our favorite players. While there's nothing inherently wrong with that, you have to acknowledge that they have their instruments arranged in a particular way for a variety of personal reasons that might not be helpful for you. While borrowing some ideas from your heroes, you have to keep in mind your own active range of motion and customize your setup accordingly. I'm heavily influenced by JP Bouvet, Mark Guiliana, and Virgil Donati, so my setup incorporates some of their choices. However, the placement of each instrument on my kit has been modified based on the following guidelines.

External Devices

Each of the primary suspended instruments (hi-hat, ride, and rack toms) will react differently when the stick hits it, impacting your body differently. The more energy required to strike an instrument, the greater the demands on the body.

The hi-hat typically has a flat surface with different reactions based on how tightly the cymbals are held together. A firmly closed set of hi-hats will have more reaction and bounce, so it will generally require less effort to play, while open hi-hats will require more energy from you to hit and then pull the stick back.

Ride cymbals can vary from light and thin to very heavy and thick. The lighter the cymbal, the more effort required to play it. A medium ride will tend to allow for more stick bounce, therefore reducing impact on the body. Heavy rides are often so thick that there are less stick reaction and rebound than you get from a medium-weight cymbal.

The effort required to play the rack toms will vary. As with the snare, the angle of the toms plays a significant role in rebound, as does the tuning. Generally, a bouncier (i.e., tighter) drumhead will help to transfer stick energy more, while a looser surface will absorb more energy and make you work harder.

The Internal Variables

The shoulder complex consists of the sternoclavicular joint (the collarbone to the rib cage), the acromioclavicular joint (the collarbone to the shoulder blade), the glenohumeral joint (the socket between the arm and the shoulder blade), and the scapulothoracic joint (the shoulder blade on the rib cage). We'll review these joints in greater detail next month, when we talk about how to avoid shoulder problems.

Our objective here is to become more aware of skeletal muscle in order to help prevent muscular-related injury. Skeletal muscle performs contractions that generate force. The closer to the body the arm is operating, the lighter the workload, resulting in less strain on the muscles. The primary muscles we will be considering here are the anterior deltoid, the biceps, the trapezius, and the supraspinatus of the rotator cuff.

As you move your arms away from a resting position, the workload on the muscular system increases. When a higher workload is sustained for long periods of time, fatigue can set in and eventually lead to injury. To prevent injury, you can reduce the load on your muscular system, especially when it comes to the instruments you play for long periods of time.

Assessment

The goal is to make your body function as effortlessly as possible. You want to be conscious of active range of motion, while also taking note of how far the limbs are forced to move away from the body. Each of the following assessments is simple. The biggest variable is determining whether or not you need an instrument placed in a specific position to help you elicit a specific sound. This will be influenced by the style of music you play and your technique.

Hi-Hat

I like to make sure I can play on the top of the hi-hats and crash on the edge while still having room to hit the snare with the opposite hand. The goal is to have your arms as relaxed as possible. For this assessment, you want to prevent any spinal motion. (Of course, when you're actually playing, you will rotate your torso a bit.)

Begin by positioning the hi-hats at a medium height. Start with your arms at the sides and your elbows bent over the top of the snare, and then turn your arms—without turning your torso—until your sticks are about 2" over the top of the hi-hats. Hold that position. If you begin to feel strain or discomfort after thirty to sixty seconds, try raising or lowering your hi-hat height until you repeat the assessment and feel strain-free. Keep your arms as close to the body as possible throughout.

Now repeat the assessment while playing singles and doubles on the hi-hat. If you feel like you're overworking your body, move the cymbals until you feel more comfortable.

Ride Cymbal

As before, start with your arms at your side and your elbows bent so the sticks are placed just over the snare. Rotate your lead arm towards the ride cymbal while keeping your arm as relaxed as possible at your side. The further you have to reach for your ride, the more strain there will be on the deltoid and bicep muscles. Hold your stick 2" above the bow of the ride for thirty to sixty seconds. If you feel strain in your arms, adjust the cymbal height higher or lower, and repeat the assessment until you no longer feel discomfort. This could mean moving

the cymbal closer to you as well.

Now play some notes on the ride. Do you feel any strain? Could you move the cymbal closer or angle it differently so there's less strain? The angle of the ride is important. You want an angle that doesn't put the wrist in a strained or hyperextended position. And the reactive force of the stick after you strike the ride should feel natural.

Rack Toms

Begin by placing your rack toms as you typically do. From the neutral position above the snare, move your arms forward, and hold the sticks 2" above the drumhead. Do you feel any strain? Try adjusting the height and angle of the rack toms to reduce discomfort. The optimal tom angle allows for natural rebound.

Play some notes on the tom to ensure that everything feels comfortable and strain-free. If not, adjust and reassess. Remember to keep your arms as relaxed and close to the body as possible.

Conclusion

The point of going through all these assessments is to optimize your comfort while playing your drumset. If something feels uncomfortable, there's probably a reason. Just remember that you never want to sacrifice your active range of motion and control solely for the purpose of looking cool.

Muscle and exercise specialist **Brandon Green** is the founder of Strata Internal Performance Center, and is the owner of the drummer-centric biomechanics and fitness website drum-mechanics.com.

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Columbus Pro Percussion
Columbus, Ohio

It's not uncommon for drum retailers to balance playing and teaching commitments with the myriad responsibilities of owning and operating a shop. But you'd be hard pressed to find a multitasker like Columbus Pro Percussion owner Jim Rupp, who's managed to maintain a consistent teaching practice (Ohio State University and Indiana University) and gigging schedule (Diane Schuur, Maynard Ferguson, Glenn Miller Orchestra, and the Woody Herman Big Band, among others) since opening the shop in 1981. As if being a shop owner-performer-educator wasn't enough, Rupp is also a clinician for Noble and Cooley, Zildjian, and Promark, and he started a farm with his wife eight years ago featuring fruit trees, cattle, and hogs—not to mention Amish neighbors who hand-craft leather cymbal and stick bags that he sells in the shop. Rupp took time out of his busy schedule to fill in *MD* on his nearly forty years in the retail game.

When I was on the road, I'd go into Ippolito's in New York, Frank's in Chicago, or Pro Drum in Hollywood…I'd hang out in those places. I got to know the repair guy at Ippolito's, Tim Herman. That's where I learned a lot of the custom work and repair stuff. Imagine that store in New York. First time I'm in there, a young kid on the road, and the teaching staff is there: Mel Lewis, Elvin Jones, Papa Jo Jones, and Michael Carvin. That was a good place to hang. And I thought, *I'd like to do this myself if I get the opportunity.*

I had a partner when I started, Bob Breithaupt. He's a percussion instructor at Capital University here in town. He had a little bit of money, and I had saved a little from being on the road, and we just pooled our money. I brought my own vacuum in once a week to vacuum. We had one drumset and one tree of Zildjian cymbals, and we just built it from there. I was here a lot when I wasn't traveling. I had friends at the time, like Phil Shipley, who's now principal percussionist in the Columbus Symphony, helping us out. It was five years before I took any money out of the store. I made my living playing and teaching.

You have to have a good staff that you trust. I'm fortunate that I've got a great crew of guys here. That's allowed me to have the perfect balance of teaching and being on the road throughout the years. I don't consider myself a brilliant businessman. I just try to get good guys and stay out of their way. Our repairman who recently retired was here twenty-six years. So a guy who did repairs here before is back. Everybody kind of has an area, but still has to cover a bit of everything. We've got a couple guys who do most of the videos. My son Steve is the manager, and he tends to do the computer stuff and the database.

We sell to colleges and high schools all around the country. Bell-kit rentals, mallets, and sticks—that's a big chunk of what we do. We've got a guy who knows that stuff inside and out. When people

While Rupp has the only dedicated drum shop in the Columbus area, he does have the usual big box competition. "We've got Guitar Center and Sam Ash here. We get along fine. They send people our way, and we send people to them. I don't want to get into a spitting contest with anybody. Our biggest competition, as I'm sure it is for everyone, is Amazon."

"Young and naive" is how Jim Rupp, the seasoned drum retailer, describes Jim Rupp, the rookie shop owner. "I learned the difference between profitability and cash flow. That was a hard lesson to learn. It's still a hard thing to keep balanced."

call up and want to know how to fix a carrier or a snare throw on a marching drum, he knows what to do. It's a little different market from the classic drumset market.

We got smaller with the recession. Our staff is smaller. But Columbus isn't so based on industry, so that helped our business. There are five universities or colleges in here, as well as the world's largest private research institute. It's stabilized the economy. When Cleveland was struggling, Columbus wasn't nearly as much.

[There are] way fewer drumsets being sold now than there were ten years ago. And I don't think you can attribute it all to the recession. I think there's just less interest in playing drums. Part of it is school programs. I'm a big fan of school music programs. But there are some issues there. You have really good educators teaching kids, but they're not teaching them drumset. They're teaching them marching snare drum and marimba—which is good, but they're not drumset players.

I think the other thing that's hurt is that a lot of [school] districts have kids playing two years on a bell kit. I think it's good to have a diverse skill set; a balance is healthy. But I'm sitting there thinking, *Would I have done that for two years?* I don't think so. I think I'd have checked out of that. I think the bigger thing is that there are no drum heroes right now. No Beatles, no Zeppelin…and there's no big movement in music inspiring kids to play drums. Even the big acts now—most people don't know who the drummer is.

Patrick Berkery

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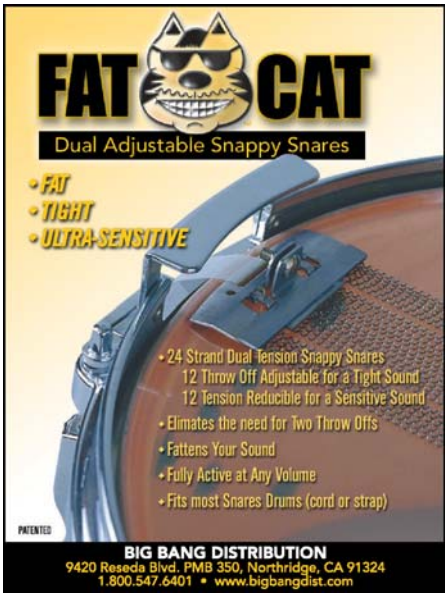

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RECORDINGS

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Nerve, Jojo Mayer's drum 'n' bass 'n' everything else collective, has been pushing the boundaries of electronic music for more than a decade, so it's a wonder to hear their new material with a totally acoustic setup of piano, upright bass, and Mayer's unaffected, beautifully organic drumkit at the forefront. Check out Mayer's bouncy brushes in "A2," featuring an undeniable groove established between his hands and kick drum that gets the head bobbing. There are tracks with dramatic mallet swells ("A5"), pieces that showcase Mayer's excellent cymbal touch and swing ("B2"), and a lovely solo drum workout that sounds like Art Blakey if he lived in Brooklyn today ("A6"). Mayer spent years developing his jazz chops, so *After the Flare* is less of a stretch than a rekindling. And the remarkable recording is rich with detail, so those who only know Mayer from his machine-like beat music would be well served to check out his approach here. (jojomayer.com)
Ilya Stemkovsky

Finally George *Life Is a Killer*

TODD SUCHERMAN takes a break from Styx for some kinder, gentler rocking.

German multi-instrumentalist Finally George (Georg Hahn) writes prog-esque rock with changing moods and flavors, and allows Styx drummer Todd Sucherman enough space to create inventive patterns but also play in a simple manner so the melodies stand out. On the atmospheric "Tears of a Million Lies," Sucherman lays down a flowing tom groove in the verses before opening up wide into pure power ballad territory in the choruses. For the keyboard solo in "She," the drummer weaves hip, syncopated accents over the 7/4, playing big snare and tom fills for added weight, and he makes the 12/8 of "Human" feel uncluttered but perfectly supportive before the track shifts. *Life Is a Killer* is a revealing showcase for Sucherman's subtler playing, giving him breathing room to fill in the material's space with enough rhythmic information to satisfy himself, rock out when needed, and shine a light on his other, equally impressive life as a session player with the goods. (finallygeorge.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

MSM Schmidt *Life*

An electric jazz oasis of top-name drummers bringing their A game.

German composer Michael Schmidt (aka MSM Schmidt) writes the kind of material killer players love to eat alive, and there's no shortage of that on this collection of funky fusion. The revolving cast of drummers assembled includes **Dave Weckl**, who grooves his behind off with ghost note–laden backbeats on "Trance" and drives "Rush" with syncopated jabs and slick splash work. **Gary Novak** flows over the 7/4 of "Saudade City" with sharp sidesticks and subtle kick doubles, and **Virgil Donati** delivers blazing technique and tasty fills on the aggressive "Medusa." **Jost Nickel** also steps into the ring with solid time and crafty hi-hats on the title track. The sound quality is superb, and all the kits have a uniformity of tone from track to track, so the listening experience isn't so jarring when the drummers switch. Those searching for some freshness in their fusion have found their no-holds-barred match of drumming heaven here. (laika-records.com)
Ilya Stemkovsky

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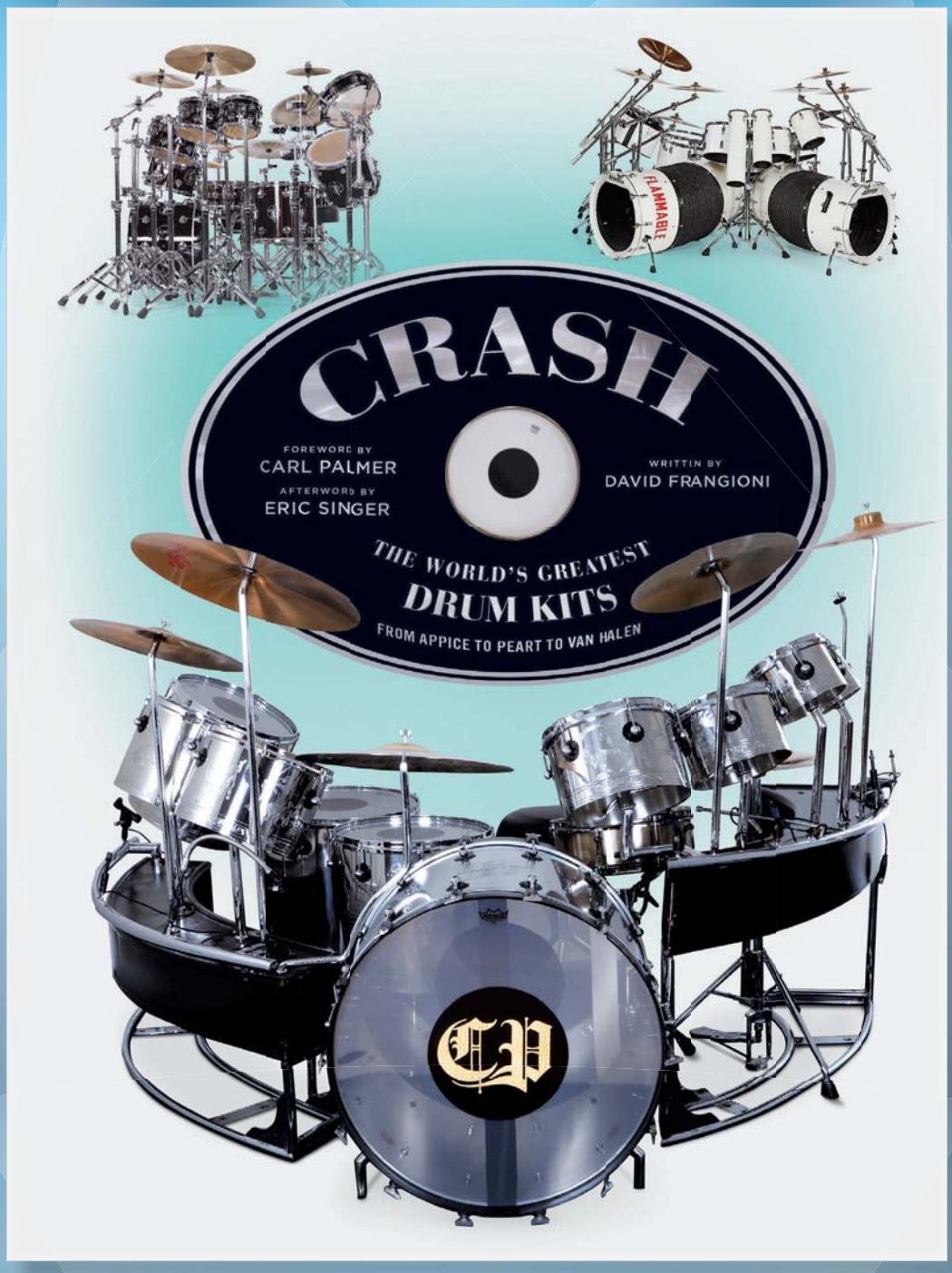

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TAKING THE REINS

Chris Beck *The Journey*

The drummer's debut as a leader reaffirms his rep as a profoundly swinging player of strength and sensitivity.

A much sought-after drummer in his native Philly, Chris Beck relocated to New York in 2006 and has fueled a long list of jazz notables ever since, including Cyrus Chestnut, Rufus Reid, and Oliver Lake. Beck leads a consistently smoking acoustic quintet rooted in straight-ahead, and penned five fine compositions of the album's ten tracks, including "Ode to Mother Young," a fluid 3/4 tune showing his keen sense of nuance behind soloists. "Byrdlike" highlights his ease with up-tempo boppers and affords some sizzling soloing space. In contrast, Beck draws from his gospel roots on "Yeshua (His Love)," laying a firm backbeat while breathing above it. Changing the palette, the drummer surprises with an R&B-tinged take on Eric Clapton's "Tears in Heaven," featuring his own heartfelt vocals. Expect Beck to have a long and strong presence in the jazz world. (AWMC)
Jeff Potter

Aaron Comess *Sculptures*
Ray LeVier *Lost and Found*
Michael Waldrop *Origin Suite*

Three varied projects spotlighting how to lead and support from the drummer's chair.

Aaron Comess has built his reputation on his solid pocket, so a synth-laden soundscape project featuring dirty backbeats ("Dogs") and J Dilla–style crooked patterns ("Whaky") is a welcome addition to his studio work. Comess's drums are at the forefront of the well-produced session, but the general musicality and ethereal, melodic content make for a satisfying listen. (aaroncomess.com)

Ray LeVier drums and sings on his new collection of angsty alternative rock, switching from the simple rock beats of "I Am No One" to spacious funk syncopation in "Tenzigs Ascent." Content with not blowing his chops over everything, LeVier lets the songs do the talking, and he throws in small but effective fills in just the right spots. (raylevier.com)

Origin Suite is a swinging, grooving big band disc with drummer, vibraphonist, and composer **Michael Waldrop** adding thoughtful support under some fine frontline solos. Waldrop works out over the Latin flavors of "Origin Suite: 3) Al Final de la Noche" with sensitivity and wonderfully controlled snare and tom interplay. (originarts.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

MULTIMEDIA

Advanced Groove Concepts: Developing Your Weaker Hand in Modern Grooves by Sam Aliano

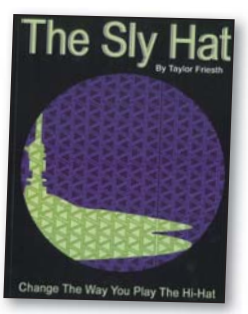
On the surface, the idea behind this book is to further develop the left hand in drumset playing. But there's a deeper idea at play.

In *Advanced Groove Concepts,* drummer, educator, and *MD* contributor Sam Aliano states that, in the past, when playing the backbeat with a few ghost notes, he felt something was missing. His solution was to develop what he calls playing "lead snare." By focusing on playing quiet rhythmic figures (all 8th notes on the snare, for example) in addition to the backbeat with the rest of the groove, his book builds up to some pretty complicated patterns.

Whether the topic is unison-handed playing, soloing, or creating syncopated left-hand snare patterns within a beat, there are some interesting ideas to explore here. One might think of Aliano's approach as advanced ghost notes. Another way to think of it is learning to feather the snare drum, as one might feather the bass drum in some jazz styles. As a technique, this is worth exploring, although in application such a style could sound cluttered. Yet helping players to break out of snare drum auto-pilot is a noble idea, as is aiding in the development of a strong left hand, and this might be just the book to help you do that. (Wizdom Media) **Martin Patmos**

The Sly Hat by Taylor Friesth

An involved look at some beyond-the-norm functions for the hi-hats.



Many drummers have grappled with the ingenious Steve Gadd pattern on "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," with its combination of foot-stepped and sticked hi-hat parts and overall inventiveness. That idea of incorporating the hi-hats in unusual ways is behind this book, and quite the challenge it proves to be. Author Friesth quickly gets into the tough stuff, with sections on adding the "sly hat" on the upbeat 16ths ("e" and "a"), phrasing over a samba or tumbao, and something he calls a 3-way flam (described as closing the hi-hat with the foot and sweeping the snare hand from the hi-hat to the snare, all in one stroke). Obviously this material will require lots of work from dedicated students, and there's the practical question of how this delicate hat-play will be heard if you try to throw it in during your "amps stuck on 11" classic-rock bar gig. But the info contained herein will open your mind if you allow it. (amazon.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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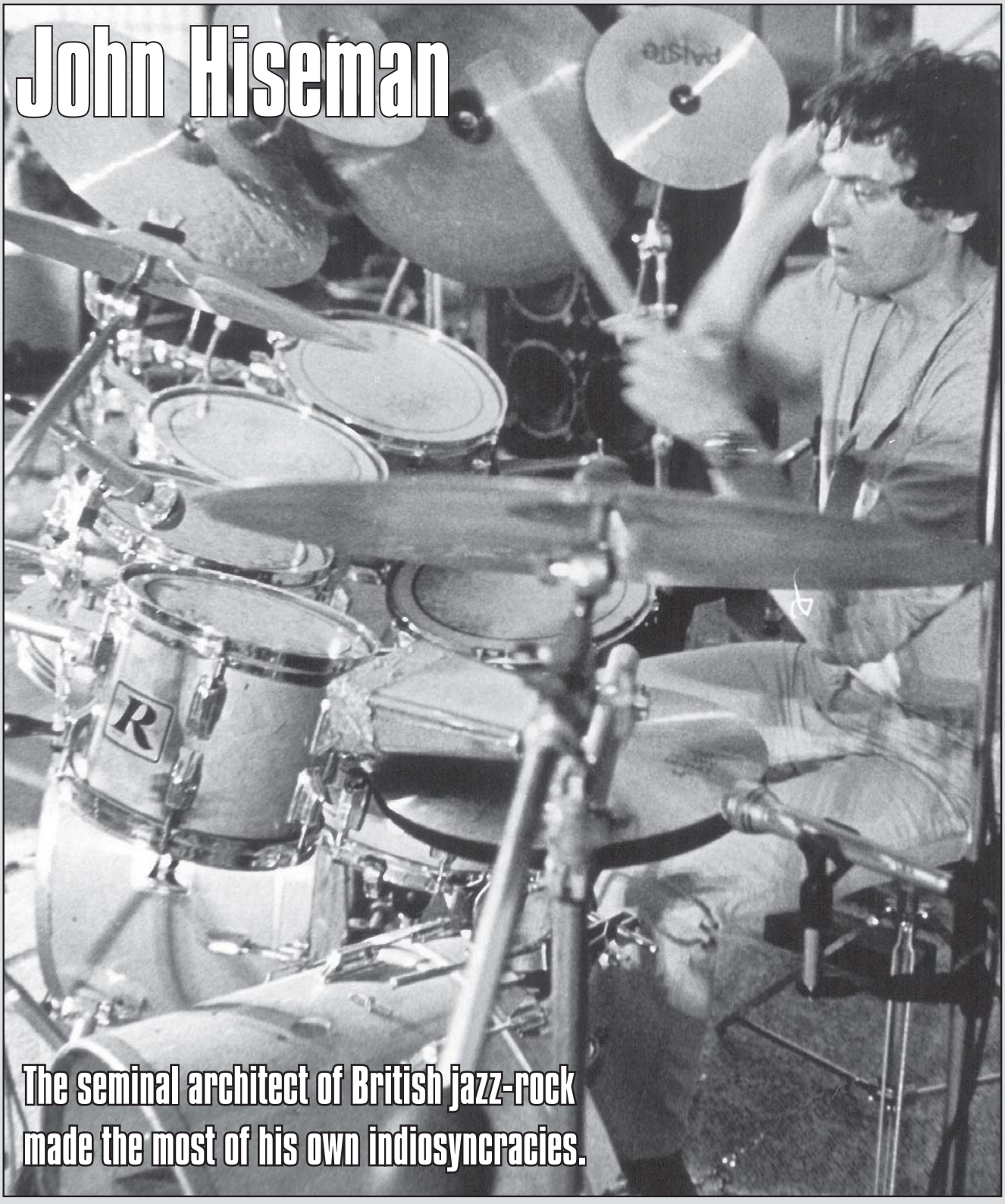


The seminal architect of British jazz-rock made the most of his own indiosyncracies.

"When people ask me what I play, the usual answer is 'the drums' because that is the instrument, but what I would like to say is, 'I play the band.' That is what I'm interested in." So said Jon Hiseman, who died this past June 12 at age seventy-three, in an extended *Modern Drummer* interview with Simon Goodwin back in 1984. Behind this answer lay a key concept in Hiseman's stated drumming philosophy: "The drums [are] less important to me than the musical context."

For Hiseman, context was everything, and the drums didn't do much without the surrounding music. A true "feel" player, Hiseman

would play from the riff and melody, as opposed to just laying a rhythm part down. He believed that, ultimately, "Drummers are only as good as the people they play with." To meet this philosophy, he founded the influential jazz-rock band Colosseum, with whom Hiseman earned a reputation as a drummer with a unique musical approach featuring powerful, dynamic, in-the-moment playing.

Hiseman came up in the late-1960s British music scene, where rock, early progressive rock, jazz, and British blues were predominant. Indeed, much music from this period shows bands blending elements from these genres. Yet as a drummer, Hiseman brought something different, having played violin and piano while being a self-taught drummer. Twice he was the successor to Ginger Baker in bands, able to follow in his footsteps while also bringing a thoughtful, articulate power. Graham Bond and John Mayall, two British blues greats, both made use of Hiseman's talents. Yet Hiseman sought the right context to best show his drumming, and that involved forming Colosseum in 1968.

With Hiseman's drums, the saxophone of Dick Heckstall-Smith, and throbbing bass, keyboards, and guitar at their core, Colosseum released their first album in 1969. What made them different was the level of jazz-style interaction brought into a rock context. While early fusion bands often came from a jazz perspective and added a rock or funk rhythm, this was a blues-rock band bringing in elements of open improvisation. The approach worked, with their albums hitting the charts in the U.K., Hiseman became a notable and influential drummer: take a listen to the extended drum solo "The Time Machine" from Colosseum's *Daughter of Time* album, in which sensitive dynamics, polyrhythms, and explosiveness all play a role in the improvisation. Such improvisational flights worked for the whole band as well.

While personnel shifts and musical directions led to the end of Colosseum—the unit's initial run culminated in 1971 with *Colosseum Live*—the vision continued in the group Tempest, which lasted until 1975. Later projects included Colosseum II and other endeavors for which the boundaries between improvisational jazz and rock were few. Said Hiseman, "I see the drums as the catalyst in the band. They have the ability to draw performances from people. That is why, whatever I happen to play, my first love is what I call 'interactive' drumming. Interactive drumming occurs when, instead of just being a rhythm machine, you are creating a backdrop for whatever else is going on. It might be a theme, it might be a soloist, it might be a texture, but whatever it is, you are creating a backdrop to it, which is shifting all the time. That, to me, is most important. Interactive playing is the key area for drums and the area in which drums have made their greatest contribution."

While Hiseman clearly had chops, they were used in creating such backdrops, in which his smooth flow predominated and little, if anything, was repeated. "I would like to be thought of as the ultimate non-drummer," he said. "I actually believe that my drum style is totally un-copyable. A guy came up to me in Sweden…and said, 'I have been listening to *Colosseum Live* and *Electric Savage*. Do you know that no two bars are played the same on those albums?' I suddenly realized that that is probably my achievement. You can't reach out and touch me."

Martin Patmos

Gene Stone

Student of Freddie Gruber, inspiration to Hal Blaine.

This past May 20, the L.A.–based jazz drummer Gene Stone (b. 1937) passed away. A former student of the educator and jazz drummer Freddie Gruber, Stone played with famed jazz artists including Don Ellis, Clare Fischer, and Russ Freeman. As a leader, the drummer's releases included *Tenor Combustion* (2006) and *Vintage Stonejazz* (recorded in 1980 and released in 2004).

"I loved the sound Gene got out of his drums," studio legend Hal Blaine tells *MD*. "And his touch was beautiful. He and Mike Romero were huge influences on me in my earliest days in Pasadena, California. But even to this day, the sound I gravitate to in my own playing comes from having heard Gene up close, playing in somebody's living room in Pasadena or at Shelly's Manne Hole in Hollywood. Everyone loved playing with Gene. He was a unique individual with a cool sound and a big heart."

INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

Richie Gajate-Garcia Receives Honorary Doctorate from Lincoln College

This past May 5, the percussionist, educator, and author Richie Gajate-Garcia received an honorary doctorate of fine arts from Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois, in recognition of his contributions to the areas of the arts and music education. Gajate-Garcia is the author of four instructional books, a faculty instructor at the Musician's Institute in Hollywood, and the inventor of the popular Latin Percussion Gajate Bracket pedal accessory. A longtime LP endorser, the drummer is also a creative collaborator on the manufacturer's Richie Gajate-Garcia Signature congas, bongos, and djembe.

Founded in 1865, Lincoln College awards honorary degrees in recognition of individuals whose accomplishments and character embody Abraham Lincoln's spirit of simplicity, sincerity, and high achievement, among other qualifications.

"The entire LP family is proud to share in this honor with Dr. Richie Gajate-Garcia," says Drum Workshop founder/LP chief product officer Don Lombardi. "Richie's longtime devotion to sharing his knowledge and experience with aspiring percussionists through his teaching, workshops, and books is unsurpassed. His innovation in creating the Gajate Bracket, which has become an industry standard and a prized tool of drummers and percussionists, has left an indelible mark on our industry."

Gajate-Garcia earned a bachelor's degree and teaching credentials from the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago before launching his professional career with Frankie Valli. His hybrid style of simultaneously playing drumset and percussion earned Gajate-Garcia the affectionate nickname "El Pulpo," meaning "The Octopus." The drummer has accompanied Phil Collins, Don Henley, Diana Ross, Patti LaBelle, the Boston Pops, and Richie Sambora, among others. His recording credits include albums with Stevie Wonder, Sting, John Denver, and the London Symphony Orchestra. He's also worked on Oscar award–winning film scores and Grammy award–winning projects.

Drummers Join Hunger Relief International to Launch the Beat Hunger Benefit Campaign for Haiti

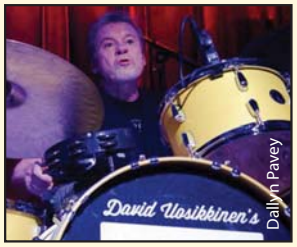
Aronoff

Jeff Luterbach

Internationally celebrated drummers and percussionists will unite in New York, Los Angeles, and London to lend their unique voice to a multimedia campaign that supports the nongovernmental organization Hunger Relief International. The Beat Hunger campaign was created and produced by Addition Media to benefit Haitian children and their families living in extreme poverty. It will launch this October across broadcast television, radio, print, digital media, and social media platforms.

Beat Hunger's participants include Stewart Copeland (the Police, Gizmodrome), Evelyn Glennie (independent), Sheila E. (George Duke, Prince), Kenny Aronoff (John Mellencamp, John Fogerty), Stephen Perkins (Jane's Addiction, Hellflower), and Kristen Gleeson-Prata (Børns). The campaign hopes to bring awareness to the ongoing need for nutritious food and support for millions of Haitians living in extreme poverty.

Who's Playing What



Dallyn Pavey

David Uosikkinen (the Hooters, Smash Palace) has joined the **Bucks County Drums** artist roster.

Palmer

Karl Latham (Big Fun(k), educator) has joined the **Innovative Percussion** roster.

Daisy Palmer (Paloma Faith), **Josh MacIntyre** (Marmozets), **Ollie Sears** (Albert Lee), and **Darren Beckett** (Brandon Flowers) have joined the **Protection Racket** family of artists.

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KIT OF THE MONTH

Drums of the Tombs

The musician, composer, and producer Tom Holkenborg, who performs under the stage name Junkie XL, custom ordered this month's featured kit to use while creating the score to the 2018 action film *Tomb Raider*. To match the movie's Pacific-island setting, Holkenborg commissioned the San Diego-based boutique percussion manufacturer and owner of Pasifika Drums and Repair, Christiaan Verbeek, to create an authentic set of handmade drums to use in the soundtrack's production. "I did a lot of research online to find the instruments and see what kind of sound they make," Holkenborg explains. "I wasn't super familiar with their tones. I found some amazing clips from various parts of the Pacific where drum ensembles would compete with one another. Usually the performances involved two bass drums, two standing drums, several woodblocks in different sizes, and hand drums."

Verbeek tells *MD* that the set he made for Holkenborg consists of 22", 24", and 32" tall log drums ("toeres"); 16" and 20" bass drums ("pahus") with goat-skin heads; higher-pitched 18x10 and 18x12 drums ("faatetes") with goat-skin heads; and 12" and 14" hand drums ("pahu tupais") that are four feet tall. "The drums tune very easily because they have ropes on the side that you can loosen or tighten," Holkenborg says. "However, the pitch difference isn't as drastic as it is with a timpani, for instance. But these drums always keep that mellow, woody sound."

Holkenborg explains that playing on an animal-skin head can be more intense than a typical synthetic option. "You have to work harder to get sound out of it, and physically it's more draining to play them for a long time," he explains. And although you can play the drums with your hands, Holkenborg says that Verbeek also made speciality mallets for the instruments. "Christiaan made a bunch of different sticks for me. Most of them have a heavy end with a smaller tip on the other side. And obviously I experimented with other mallets to see what kinds of different sounds I could get out of the drums."

To check out Holkenborg demonstrating this kit, head to moderndrummer.com.

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.

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